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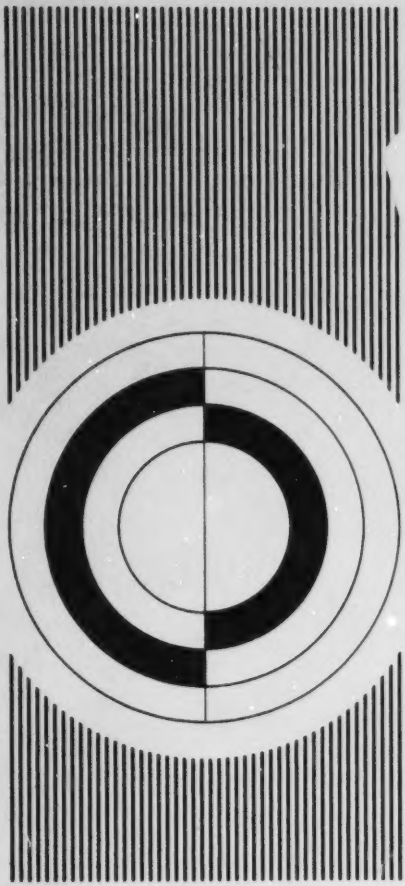
ABSTRACT

Seven research reports of the Project to Develop Evaluative Criteria and Procedures for the Accreditation of Nontraditional Education are presented. Contents are as follows: "Nontraditional Certificate Programs," by John Harris and Philip N. McCullough; "Salient Points for 'A Study of the Acceptability and Negotiability of External Degrees,'" by John Harris; "Institutional Accreditation and Nontraditional Undergraduate Educational Institutions and Programs," by John Harris; "Critical Characteristics of an Accreditable Institution, Basic Purposes of Accreditation, and Nontraditional Forms of Most Concern," by John Harris; "A Review of Nontraditional Graduate Degrees," by Paul L. Dressel; "Analysis of the National Survey on Accreditation and Nontraditional Education," by John Harris and Grover J. Andrews; and "Regional Accreditation Standards," by Kay J. Andersen. Rosters of participating institutions are included, as are letters and questionnaires used in surveying degree recipients and administrators. (SW)

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RESEARCH REPORTS

- By Kay J. Andersen, Grover J. Andrews, Paul L. Dressel, John Harris, and Philip N. McCullough

SEVEN REPORTS of the Project
to Develop Evaluative Criteria and
Procedures for the Accreditation
of Nontraditional Education
Volume 2 • September 1978

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This publication is one of four volumes of the reports of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation project to develop evaluative criteria for the accreditation of nontraditional education. The other reports are as follows:

Volume 1: Assessing Nontraditional Education, the summary report of the project

Volume 3: Problems and Principles in the Recognition or Accreditation of Graduate Education

Volume 4: A Taxonomy of Classification and Determination of the Nontraditional Nature of Postsecondary Institutions: Essential Components, Elements, and Criteria for Evaluation

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Grover J. Andrews, Project Director

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Report No. 1

NONTRADITIONAL CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

By John Harris and Philip N. McCullough

NONTRADITIONAL CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Introduction

Since the early 1960s community colleges, technical institutes, and vocational schools have been the most rapidly growing segments of post-secondary education in the United States. Most of these institutions offer programs that award certificates or diplomas instead of, or in addition to, degrees. In his study, Stephen Spurr adopted the general definition that a certificate is a "formal recognition conferred by a university or college for the completion of a course of study of lesser length or status than those recognized by the awarding of a degree."¹ According to Arthur Levine's Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum, certificate programs are, for the most part, highly specialized career courses which are usually, though not always, shorter than degree programs and are occasionally geared for admission to licensure or career entrance tests.²

Beyond identifying nontraditional modes of learning, this review sought to identify problems encountered using nontraditional delivery systems. It was therefore appropriate to examine the application of conventional standards of accreditation to these nontraditional programs.

¹Stephen H. Spurr, Academic Degree Structures: Innovative Approaches (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 4.

²Arthur Levine, Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), p. 165

The researchers began by examining the existing standards and procedures of agencies involved in certificate programs and recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). Next, specific information was collected about each accreditation agency's approach to nontraditional educational programs. Materials collected from institutions participating in the project were reviewed to determine significant findings. In addition, telephone and personal interviews were held with Robert E. Swenson of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, B. E. Childers of the Commission on Occupational Education Institutions of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, William A. Goddard of the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools, and Michael P. Lambert of the National Home Study Council. The purpose of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of nontraditional delivery of certificate programs as well as to determine accreditation problem areas.

To help establish a perspective on nontraditional education as it relates to certificate or diploma programs, a variety of institutions were examined from among the technical institutes, community colleges, and vocational-technical schools participating in the study. This examination revealed that the actual number of certificate programs offered changes continually based on demand. Most certificate or diploma programs can be characterized as occupational in nature, preparing individuals for employment or advancement. Among some private trade and technical schools, credits are not emphasized or earned in certificate programs. The use of credits tends to be more prevalent among collegiate institutions.

An initial requirement in developing a certificate program is to establish the related educational objectives. The total educational activity and the outcomes must then relate directly to these primary objectives. The curriculum includes intensive study of the identified careers; therefore, the program must adequately prepare an individual for employment. General education courses are not always required, but depend on the institutional setting and specific career training. A typical nontraditional delivery method is individualized instruction, usually described as competency based. When the instruction is self-paced, there may not be a need for credit hours and academic calendars. Other nontraditional methods for learning such as media instruction, contract learning, credit by examination, and credit for experiential learning are sometimes used with more traditional curriculum.

Examples of Certificate Programs

Seven institutions were reviewed as examples of certificate programs.

Barstow College in California has been involved in out-of-district military programs through a contract with a proprietary organization. A certificate of completion in administration of justice is offered on military bases in California, Hawaii, and Japan. Courses are available on a tuition basis provided there is a sufficient demand, a qualified instructor, and no other institution is offering the courses at the location served by Barstow.

In Bellingham, Washington, Whatcom Community College offers a number of different certificate programs. The college is committed to a diffused

delivery system to meet the needs of the community, and all instruction is off-campus in numerous community centers, mobile units, and single-unit rentals. Instructional methods include independent study, programmed study, media instruction, and challenge tests. The college has developed an Alternative Learning Experiences Program with four major components: (1) learning contracts, (2) the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), (3) credit for prior experiential learning, and (4) course challenge. (Course challenge allows a student to waive a course by passing an examination covering the pertinent materials.) Careful selection of faculty insures that these instructional modes are used properly, and there is an elaborate training program for faculty members who are not experienced in nontraditional delivery methods.

A number of certificate and degree programs are available from the Community College of Vermont. Competency-based education is stressed with emphasis on outcomes and expectations. The college's nontraditional delivery method is founded on contract learning. Using independent study and assessment of experiential learning, each student develops a contract which, upon completion, qualifies him or her for a certificate or degree in a specially chosen field.

Like most others mentioned, the certificate programs at Tarrant County Junior College in Texas offer self-paced, individualized instruction. A certificate of completion is awarded in such fields as appliance service and repair, auto mechanics, and aviation maintenance. Nontraditional delivery methods include media instruction and credit by examination, and students are also allowed to participate in the CLEP program.

State Technical Institute in Memphis has a number of certificate programs in engineering technology, business technology, and science technology. Individualized instruction is the main component of these programs, also. English and mathematics courses, which are required in both degree and certificate programs, have been developed using self-paced instruction. An industrial technology program is in a multimedia instructional mode using closed-circuit television. Credit by examination can also be an integral part of a student's academic endeavor.

At Fort Lee, Virginia, the U. S. Army Quartermaster School emphasizes self-paced instruction via correspondence and multimedia. Through the growing use of self-guided lesson quizzes, programmed instruction, and practical exercises, students are guided toward more self-direction in correspondence training. Computer-assisted instruction along with items such as programmed texts, audio tapes, and sound slides make up the bulk of the multimedia instruction. The purpose of this school is to meet the special needs of students in relation to the requirements of the subject matter; a second goal is to get the students into jobs as quickly as possible.

The Photography School, a department of the U. S. Navy Technical Training Center, Corry Station, Florida, is committed to self-paced, individualized instruction. Curriculum content is determined by job task analysis and then developed into modules. In this nontraditional method, the duties of the learning supervisor have become more demanding and require the updating of supervisor credentials to insure proper oversight at all stages of training.

Accreditation Concerns

In a review of self-study reports and site evaluations of the selected institutions, few accreditation problems surfaced. However, the use made of part-time faculty does concern some institutions. Many of the nontraditional certificate programs at postsecondary institutions depend heavily on part-time and adjunct faculty. Visiting teams using more conventional standards to evaluate these programs may think that the numbers of part-time faculty are too high. One institution reported a problem in orienting part-time instructors to its educational setting.

To gain a better understanding of possible accreditation problems, some member agencies of COPA were contacted. One of these agencies is the National Home Study Council, which accredits both private and non-private schools offering certificates through correspondence study. According to the Council, only about one-fifth of all private home study schools are accredited. To overcome the significant problem of not having students available for face to face discussion when a home study school is visited, the Council surveys students, randomly selected from school files, with a general questionnaire.

Advertising practices are another concern of the Home Study Council. One of the accreditation standards of the Council states that promotional literature used by a school must be completely truthful and must not give any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions of the school. The core question asked by the Council is, does the home study school deliver on its promises to the student? Home study, like other certificate programs, is based on objectives and outcomes. Progress and follow-up studies of home study graduates help the National Home Study Council reach conclusions about the quality of a home study course.

The National Association of Trade and Technical Schools sees a problem in defining what is nontraditional. Because trade and technical schools attract non-college-bound students to their educational programs, they tend to de-emphasize the use of credits. As with the National Home Study Council, the Association's major concern is that students receive what they pay for and obtain employment after training.

Technical courses that require heavy equipment expenditures are often contracted to private firms by accredited institutions, and these contracted or subletted programs are identified by the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools as a developing accreditation problem. The contractor often claims accreditation because it operates a program for an accredited institution. For example, an aviation school operating a contract flying instruction program for an accredited technical institute might claim to be accredited.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges has encountered problems in dealing with contract programs, military-based programs, credit for experiential learning, and outcomes measurements. The Commission mentioned that some programs and methods lack good supervision and other quality control measures, sound criteria for awarding of credit, and sufficient student support services. The Commission also indicated concern about substantial use of part-time faculty without well-designed selection and evaluation procedures.

Accrediting agencies, such as the Commission on Occupational Education Institutions of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, that are involved with vocational and technical programs have had little trouble

with nontraditional delivery methods because vocational programs have been nontraditional for some time in that they emphasize competency-based instruction. The key to accrediting vocational certificate programs is relating program objectives with specific outcomes to be achieved and validating methods for measuring student achievement.

A major problem in the accreditation of nontraditional programs is really the problem of determining what standards should be used. While conventional standards may not always apply, they are frequently used by site evaluation teams because these standards are familiar. For example, many certificate programs, as mentioned earlier, depend heavily upon the use of part-time faculty. Though this situation is not necessarily detrimental to the quality of the program, evaluation teams often raise questions based on conventional standards and conventional attitudes. This reaction may indicate that it is easier for visiting committees to evaluate programs by traditional standards than it is to find more direct ways to assess the quality of educational results in nontraditional programs.

In many certificate programs, the primary goal of the institutions offering occupational training is employment of students upon completion of the program. If a student completing a training program is not qualified for employment, the institution has not met its expressed purpose. One of the quality control standards for the accrediting agency, therefore, should be placement and advancement records of graduates, including assessment of student and employer satisfaction with the quality of the program. Such follow-up studies will provide important information to help a prospective student select a quality program that can lead to employment or advancement in a particular field.

Summary and Conclusions

A primary characteristic of many certificate programs is individualized instruction with specific objectives. The programs require specific study of an occupation to prepare an individual to obtain employment. The instruction is usually self-paced using nontraditional modes such as contract learning, credit by examination, media instruction, and correspondence study.

Though few accrediting problems surfaced in a study of accrediting reports, the number of part-time faculty used is of concern to some accrediting teams that have evaluated institutions offering certificate programs. Conventional accreditation standards have usually been applied, because there are no other standards established for nontraditional delivery systems. Based on discussions with agencies, other concerns include misleading advertising practices, problems with subletted educational programs, lack of sound criteria for the awarding of credit, insufficient support services, and inadequate outcomes measurements.

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Institutional Documents

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State Technical Institute in Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee.

Tarrant County Junior College, Fort Worth, Texas.

U. S. Army Quartermaster School, Fort Lee, Virginia.

Whatcom Community College, Bellingham, Washington.

Report No. 2

SALIENT POINTS FROM "A STUDY OF THE
ACCEPTABILITY AND NEGOTIABILITY OF EXTERNAL DEGREES"

By John Harris

SALIENT POINTS FROM "A STUDY OF THE
ACCEPTABILITY AND NEGOTIABILITY OF EXTERNAL DEGREES"

Introduction

This report is a summary of a study on the acceptability and negotiability of external degrees. The study was composed of two major surveys of external degree efforts: a survey of institutions offering external degrees and a survey of graduates from a sample of the institutions surveyed.* The study was done by Laure Sharp and Carol Sosdian of the Bureau of Social Science Research, Inc. (BSSR), under contract to the National Institute of Education, and this summary has been reviewed by Sosdian.

It is important to note that the BSSR study concentrates on external degrees rather than the broader range of nontraditional higher education. By external degree programs, Sharp and Sosdian mean degree programs that are primarily nonresidential and nonclassroom in nature. The only institutions included were those that required no more than 25 percent of a student's total work toward a degree to be campus-based, classroom instruction.

*Carol P. Sosdian, External Degrees: Programs and Student Characteristics (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1978); and Carol P. Sosdian and Laure M. Sharp, The External Degree as a Credential: Graduates' Experiences in Employment and Further Study (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1978).

In contrast, the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) Project on Nontraditional Education covers many different areas, including external degrees, campus-free institutions, competency-based instructional programs, modular curricular design, multimedia instructional degree programs, learning contracts for degrees, off-campus programs, military base instruction, independent study programs, and experiential learning--at all levels and in private, proprietary, and public institutions and organizations. Though the BSSR study focuses on only part of the much larger range of the programs included in the COPA project, enough can be learned from this survey that a separate study of external degrees for this project is not justified.

Survey of Institutions

Only 16 percent of the 134 institutions were free standing, that is, founded expressly for the purpose of hosting external degree programs. The other 84 percent were founded for more traditional educational purposes.

Sharp and Sosdian identified 183 institutions offering external degrees. Of these, 134 institutions qualified for inclusion in their study.

Enrollment

In fall 1976, these 134 institutions offered 244 external degree programs enrolling slightly more than 54,000 students. Compared with the more than eleven million students enrolled in all of postsecondary education in the fall of 1975, enrollment in external degree programs

(by the BSSR study definition) is essentially insignificant.

Accreditation Status

Within the 134 external degree institutions were 141 divisions: administrative units within an institution hosting one or more external degree programs (e.g., a College of Special Programs or an Office of Extended Studies). Of these 141 divisions, 128 furnished information about accreditation, with 116 indicating either that they were part of regionally accredited institutions or that they themselves constituted accredited institutions. Of the other twelve that responded, eleven were seeking accreditation, and one was not. If it were assumed that the thirteen which did not furnish accreditation information were unaccredited, only 10 per cent of the external degree institutions would not be accredited.

Areas of Study

Within the 244 external degree programs, there were 397 degree program areas of study. The four predominant areas were: General or Liberal Studies, Applied Social Sciences, Business or Public Administration, and Individualized Studies. Of the 244 external degree programs, 174 were at the baccalaureate level and 66 at the associate level.

Graduates

As of September 1976, 18,421 people had graduated from these external degree programs. Three-fourths of the graduates received bachelor degrees and one-fourth associate degrees. That external degrees are relatively new (three-fourths of the external degree

programs in this study have been established since 1972) is shown by the fact that 42 percent of these graduates received their degrees between September 1975 and August 1976.

Admissions

More than two-thirds (69%) of the associate degree program areas required a high school diploma or G.E.D. equivalency for admission; yet 31 percent had no fixed minimum. More than one-half (55%) of the baccalaureate programs required a high school diploma or G.E.D. equivalency for admission; 18 percent required one to two years of college; and one-fourth had no fixed minimum.

Grading

In both the associate and bachelor's program, 61 percent of the program areas used the traditional A-B-C-D-F grading procedure. A fifth of the associate and a tenth (11%) of the bachelor's programs used credit/no credit approaches. A tenth of the associate and bachelor's program areas used evaluation procedures agreed upon by a student and a faculty member.

Credit Recognition

For Sharp and Sosdian the extent of "externality" depended on the amount of prior learning an institution would recognize for degree credit. Of the program areas surveyed in this study, 75 percent would allow prior learning from all sources to account for 71 to 100 percent of a student's degree requirements. The average maximum amount allowed by associate degree program areas was 65 percent, and by bachelor program areas,

73 percent. These percentages are considerably reduced when prior learning is limited to the experiential type rather than all all sources: 25 percent for the associate program areas and 44 percent for the bachelor's program areas.

Another way to calculate externality is to use the minimum number of days required in campus-based classroom study. On the average, the minimum of days required in associate degree program areas was 33, and in bachelor's 24. The combined average was 26.

Overview

1. External degree programs as defined by this study do not account for a significant part of enrollments in American postsecondary education.
2. Most of the development and expansion of external degree programs has occurred in the 1970s.
3. Of the institutions offering external degree programs, the overwhelming majority either have or are seeking accreditation.
4. Most external degree institutions use traditional grading practices.

Survey of Graduates

The BSSR study sampled 3,499 graduates from 32 undergraduate external degree programs. All were mailed a survey questionnaire. Eventually, 852 were eliminated from the survey sample (most because of insufficient addresses that resulted in undelivered questionnaires). Of the 2,647 graduates remaining in the survey, 1,486 returned their questionnaires, a 56 percent response rate. These graduates received their degrees in 1975 or earlier.

Demographic Characteristics

Forty percent of the graduates sampled had earned associate degrees; 60 percent baccalaureates. The three largest groups of graduates in descending order were in the fields of business/public administration, applied social sciences or human services, and general studies.

Eight-nine percent of the graduates were white, and 71 percent were men. Eighty percent were married; 69 percent had children; and 89 percent were employed. The average earnings were about \$15,000 annually. Associate graduates tended to be younger than baccalaureate graduates, to be employed at lower levels, and to have lower incomes.

Of the women graduates, the largest proportion in any area of study was 31 percent in applied social sciences. In comparison, 37 percent of the men were business/public administration graduates. Ninety-four percent of the men had jobs while enrolled in the external degree program; this was true of 77 percent of the women graduates.

The median age of the associate graduates was 33; for bachelor graduates, 37; and for both degree groups, men and women, 36. It is interesting that 13 percent of the graduates were 50 years old and older. Fifteen percent of the associate graduates and 35 percent of the bachelor graduates had previously completed college degrees. Seventy-five percent of all graduates in the sample had been enrolled in traditional associate or bachelor programs without completing them.

Motivations

Consistent with the above information, the two most important reasons for choosing external rather than traditional programs for these graduates were:

1. Needed/wanted to maintain a regular working schedule.
2. Chance to have previous college course work recognized for credit.

About three fourths of these graduates reported receiving credit in their external degree programs for previous college work. About one-third received credit for work or job experience, standardized examination scores, and military service. About one-fifth received credit for life experience, correspondence courses, and associate degrees.

Why did the graduates select particular external degree programs? Their reasons, according to their survey responses, were as follows (in order of the most frequently to the least frequently given response):

1. Sounded new and interesting.
2. Good reputation of program.
3. Lower cost.
4. Recommended by counselor or advisor.
5. Friends in similar program.

Of ten goals on entering the external degree program, the following three were most important to the graduates in descending order:

1. To have the satisfaction of having the degree.
2. To obtain prerequisites for entry into a higher level degree program.
3. To improve my chances of good pay and/or promotion in my career.

The three goals cited least by the respondents as important to them were:

1. To develop a new career.
2. To obtain the credential which would make me eligible

to receive the right pay for the work I already was (am) doing.

3. To qualify for a professional license.

Eighty percent or more of the graduates reported having reached the following four out of the ten goals presented in the questionnaire:

1. To have the satisfaction of having a degree
2. To feel the enjoyment and have the experience of learning on my own.
3. To learn more about the subject area simply because I was interested in it.
4. To improve my job skills and my ability to perform my work.

Benefits

When the graduates were asked to choose the most important benefit from obtaining their respective degrees, 48 percent of the associate degree holders checked, "Having the degree as a 'stepping stone' to go on for more education or training." Twenty percent checked, "The satisfaction of having the degree."

The three most frequently chosen benefits for baccalaureate holders were:

1. Having the degree as a credential towards job opportunities I might not otherwise have had. (32%)
2. Having the degree as a "stepping stone" to go on for more education or training. (31%)
3. The satisfaction of having the degree. (20%)

The greatest gain from the external degree programs as reported by the graduates was their "sense of personal achievement and self satisfaction." The next largest gain was, "Intellectual curiosity; discovering and enjoying knowledge." The two matters in which they felt they had gained the least were: "The ability to speak well in public" and "the ability to write well."

The graduates were asked to compare the value of their external degrees to that of traditional degrees, not only in their own eyes but also in the view of persons close to them. Only 8 percent of the graduates believed their external degrees were less valuable to them than a traditional degree. The percentages of graduates who thought people close to them viewed the external degree as less valuable were as follows: spouses (8%), relatives (7%), friends (9%), employers (12%), co-workers (15%).

Work

About 90 percent of the associate and baccalaureate graduates surveyed were employed while in the external degree programs and at the time the survey was done. Slightly more than three-fourths of the women were so employed compared to about 95 percent of the men.

Slightly less than one-half of those responding had professional, subprofessional, or technical jobs while they were in the external degree programs, and slightly more than one-half held such jobs after graduation at the time of the survey. Some of this slight shift upward in job status can be attributed to movement out of the armed services. (Twenty-three percent of the graduates were in the armed services at the time they were in the external degree programs and 16 percent were in the service at the time of the survey.)

While they were enrolled in the external degree programs, the proportion of men in professional, subprofessional, or technical jobs was about 30 percentage points below that of women (38% and 67% respectively). After graduation the spread was almost as great (47% men and 73% women). Twenty-two percent of the women were in clerical jobs before graduation and 14 percent afterwards.

About one-half of the graduates believed the jobs they held while in the external degree programs and afterwards had definite career potential. Slightly more than one-fifth believed they had realized their career goals. Slightly less than one-fifth say their jobs in one of the three following ways:

1. Only temporary until can/could obtain type of work really want(ed).
2. A job to earn money for something else (education, travel, extra household income).
3. A job to earn money while deciding what kind of work (I) really wanted to do.

A basic question for many is how their employers feel about their being in a degree program. Fifteen percent of the graduates said their employer did not know about their studies. On the other hand, 30 percent of the graduates had some of their expenses paid by their employers. Slightly more than one-half of the graduates said their employer gave moral support to their being in their respective programs.

How useful, in the graduates views, were the external degrees in their work? About one-half expected some kind of change in job circumstances as a result of completing the external degree programs. Sixty-seven percent of them expected increased esteem from their co-workers and employers, and 72 percent of the graduates said this change had occurred. Between 55 and 60 percent expected increases in job responsibilities and promotion or increase in pay benefits, and this happened with the same proportions. About 40 to 50 percent expected to change to a different job or to increase their job security, and this occurred for the same proportion of graduates.

What factors seem to have had the most to do with whether or not graduates had changed job status? The factors that seemed to help women

the most in increasing job responsibility were if they were less than 30 years old and employed in some nonmanufacturing field other than education, nonprofit service, or medical/law/finance. The women who were least likely to have increases in job responsibilities were those with degrees in general/liberal studies or who were employed in medical/law/finance fields. The only factor having a significant effect on the job status of men was age: If they were over 50 years old, they were less likely to have an increase in job responsibilities.

The men who were most likely to have pay increases or promotions as a result of the external degree program were those with service jobs. Men employed by nonprofit service organizations, on the other hand, were least likely to get pay increases or promotions. Women who were from 30 to 39 years old or employed by medical/law/finance organizations were most likely to get pay increases or promotions.

A complete change of jobs was least likely to happen with men over 50 and men employed by nonprofit service organizations. Women were most likely to change if employed by medical/law/finance organizations.

In general, the advantages to associate graduates were in terms of increase in job responsibility and change of jobs if they were employed in clerical, sales, or lower management jobs.

Education Afterwards

The major portion of the graduates of external degree programs intend to continue their education. Sixty-two percent of the associate graduates and 54 percent of the bachelor graduates have applied for admission to a subsequent degree program.

When graduates were asked how they thought their external degrees compared with traditional degrees in terms of subject content preparation, study skills preparation, and general performance, more than 90 percent said they were either the same or better. Forty-four percent said they were better prepared than traditional graduates in subject content; 48 percent said their study skills preparation was better; and 57 percent rated their general performance above traditional graduates.

Why have some graduates not applied for further study? At least 20 percent of those with associate degrees not applying for further study cited the follow reasons:

1. Didn't have time both to work and to go on for more schooling.
2. Financial problems.
3. Decided I didn't need or really want a further degree for now.
4. Needed time to care for home and family.

Graduates from baccalaureate programs cited reasons 1. and 3. most often.

Of those graduates who have applied for further education, only 11 percent answered yes to the following question: "Do you think you experienced special problems with your application(s) (e.g., unusually long time to process your application, denial of admission, etc.) because of your 'nontraditional' or 'external' degree?" Fourteen percent of those with bachelor's degrees thought they had experienced problems, but only 7 percent of those with associate degrees. Nineteen percent of the women believed that they had had problems as compared with 8 percent of the men.

This percentage of reported difficulty seems small when the difference and relative newness of the degrees is considered. Also, the

nature of the perceived difficulties is not serious. The most frequently cited difficulties were:

1. Requests for additional letter of reference from faculty or advisor.
2. Having to agree to probationary period.
3. Having personal interviews not required of other applicants.

For those seeking admission to graduate programs, the most often cited difficulties were lack of regional accreditation and use of non-traditional transcripts. (Sharp and Sosdian point out that seventeen of the twenty institutions whose graduates were surveyed were accredited as of September 1976. Since then two of the remaining three have received regional accreditation, and the third is a formal candidate.)

Observations

The following observations are offered as summarizing conclusions:

1. External degree programs as defined by this study represent only a part of nontraditional higher education as identified by accreditation commissions.
2. Most of the students in external degree programs are in their middle years.
3. In terms of proportion of total American higher education enrollment, enrollments in external degree programs are negligible.
4. Practically all of the institutions surveyed are accredited.
5. Most use conventional grading practices.
6. Most of the external degree programs have come into being in the 1970s.

7. The reasons most people chose the external degree programs were that they could go to school and work at the same time and they could receive credit for prior college work.

8. Most of the programs are in areas such as social sciences and humanities.

9. The two most important reasons to the graduates for continuing their education were the satisfaction of having the degree and meeting the requirements for entry into a higher degree program.

10. The greatest gains the graduates report are satisfaction and discovering and enjoying knowledge.

11. Approximately one-half of the graduates believe their job circumstances improved as a result of completing the external degree program.

12. More than one-half of the graduates applied for admission to a subsequent degree program, and nearly 90 percent of those were admitted and enrolled.

13. Only about 10 percent of these graduates perceived that they had any unusual problems in applying for subsequent degree programs, and these problems did not seem serious on the whole.

Report No. 3

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION AND
NONTRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS

By John Harris

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION AND
NONTRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS

Introduction

Part of the research for the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation's (COPA) Project on Nontraditional Education was to determine what, if any, problems regional accreditation agencies encountered in dealing with non-traditional undergraduate programs.* This report is based primarily on information gathered from a variety of site reports made by visiting teams from all of the regional associations. The site reports were studied with two main questions in mind: What is "unusual" or "nontraditional" about these undergraduate institutions or programs? What problems do the peer review teams representing the accreditation agencies have with these unusual or nontraditional institutions or programs?

The types of programs represented in this study by the site reports are described briefly. Also, the researcher's understanding is offered of how accreditation deals with these institutions and programs as reflected in these site reports and as informed by relevant, professional experience with accreditation reviews of nontraditional education.

*Report No. 1 of this study deals with the accreditation of vocational-technical certificate programs, and Report No. 2 presents a summary of the Bureau of Social Science Research study on the acceptability and negotiability of external degrees.

From the very beginning of the COPA project, the staff has believed that accreditation problems in dealing with nontraditional institutions are symptomatic of larger, more general accreditation questions. For example, the small amount of emphasis typically given to educational results as opposed to the usual emphasis on structure and process in accreditation is made quite vivid when dealing with several types of nontraditional higher education. This concern about accreditation in general was put well by Patricia Thrash in her notes on a project meeting held in Atlanta in August 1977.

The reason that the evaluation of nontraditional institutions has been such a knotty problem is that it has served as the focus for identification of what is wrong with accrediting procedures for all institutions. That is, we have not really had strong and focused self-study reports which deal effectively with both process and outcomes; and we certainly have not had strong team reports in which team accrediting recommendations flow logically from an assessment of valid institutional strengths and concerns which flow logically from the report which precedes these elements. Therefore, because we really haven't gotten at the root causes in our regional accreditation programs (or in the COPA Danforth project), nontraditional programs and in turn this project can be identified as responses to what Persig is referring to in the quote I used. Let me try to adapt it. The inadequacy of current forms in postsecondary education to deal with what's coming out of institutions has really caused hang-ups which are exemplified when we try to evaluate nontraditional institutions. Therefore, this COPA project represents a lateral drift--we're stepping sideways to look at a particular problem which, if we deal with it well, may really help us to make progress in evaluating the total spectrum of postsecondary institutions. We are going to have to admit that we weren't doing a good job in looking critically at institutions of any kind and that the emergence of nontraditional entities which demanded evaluation have put the finger on the total problem.

Hence, we cannot develop this COPA project without examining some root issues such as: mission of accreditation (what should it really be doing); criteria for effective graduate education, etc.

If we do, as a result of this project, develop effective means of institutional self-study and develop appropriate and useful criteria for evaluating institutions and programs that are nontraditional, then these may be applied to all institutions.

My thesis is that there should not be a nontraditional-traditional dichotomy because we still haven't come up with an adequate definition of either. Instead, we will find that institutions and programs exist along a spectrum, with what we call "traditional" and "nontraditional" at opposite ends of the spectrum. Therefore, the most positive outcome of this project would be to get at some elements which will change the evaluation of postsecondary institutions at its roots.

These were also the general sentiments expressed at the February 1978 meeting of the Advisory Committee.

In its barest form, the nontraditional movement suggests by its very presence that higher education can be successfully delivered without certain of the processes and structures historically presumed to be essential. It also suggests in some instances that what it is doing is more effective or valid than what is often done in traditional institutions. If accreditation is to deal effectively with nontraditional institutions, therefore, it will have to accommodate to their having different outcomes from those of traditional institutions. Inevitably, then, the question is how necessary are some of the traditional expectations of any institution by accrediting bodies?

The emphasis on site reports in this review of accreditation of non-traditional undergraduate programs and institutions was determined early in the project. Because the primary purpose of this project was to identify the critical issues that confront institutional accreditation in dealing with nontraditional higher education, it was logical to assume that the most direct manifestation of those issues and difficulties would be revealed through the visiting team analyses rather than the institutions' self-studies. The research used site reports on thirty-two undergraduate programs from all six accrediting regions and also any institutional

responses to site reports or follow-up or progress reports from the institutions.

Accreditation has adapted well to the changing circumstances of American higher education. It has persevered though caught between diversity and maintenance of quality. It has done much with a few full-time staff people and a great many academic people contributing their time and energies. This writer does believe that the nontraditional movement exposes some weak spots in the generally strong fabric of accreditation. Far from producing a negative assessment of accreditation, however, research for this project has shown that the social and educational needs for nongovernmentally controlled, voluntary accreditation are greater now than they have ever been.

Given its resources and the varied nature of American higher education, the expectations of accreditation are often unrealistic. Robert Kirkwood put this problem well in one of the Advisory Committee meetings:

Accreditation has been criticized for its shortcomings. Most of the critics fail to recognize the ambiguity of higher education. There are certain complexities that characterize (higher education) but there is pressure for us to come up with a simple formula for this great complexity--oversimplification. I would hope that there has to be a tolerance for ambiguity....

The criticisms offered in this report are offered in the same spirit that accrediting groups bring to their activities. Visiting committees often focus on weaknesses rather than strengths. Strengths will take care of themselves; it's weaknesses that should be identified and addressed.

Site Reports

A total of thirty-two site reports were reviewed from the regional associations for this report as follows: Middle States--5, New England--7, North Central--4, Northwest--3, Southern--6, Western--7.

How were these thirty-two reports selected from all those submitted? The project was asked to pull all those site reports from institutions not emphasizing graduate programs. The reports reviewed by this writer were so selected.

The reports submitted were of varying types. For the most part, they were done by visiting committees sent by the senior college commissions of the respective regional accrediting associations. In a case or two, however, they were reports for agencies reviewing the institutions for licensure or charter, not for accreditation. In another instance, a report was on whether or not a branch of the armed services was justified under federal criteria in establishing a degree-granting institution. In another case, a report was by a team directly commissioned by USOE to determine the likelihood of accreditation in order to establish the institution's eligibility for federal funds. In some cases, the reports were accrediting agency staff reports, not peer team reports. One document was a report commissioned not by an accrediting agency but by a governing board on the soundness and viability of an independent study program within a conventional, state-supported university.

In addition to the thirty-two site reports, there were seven instances of institutions writing either reactions to the visiting committee reports of progress reports. These were also reviewed.

Most of the programs and institutions involved are very small in regard to numbers. (There are a few exceptions such as Empire State College and the External Degree Program of New York.) This relative smallness is consistent with the study on undergraduate external degree programs by the Bureau of Social Science Research, Inc. (BSSR). The BSSR study concluded that for all the talk about external degree programs, they actually account for a very small proportion of American undergraduate enrollment.

The reports forming the basis of this study were written between 1972 and 1978. About one-half of the reports are based on site visits done in and after 1976.

After reading and rereading thirty-two site reports, one comes away with several appraisals of them. In the interest of improving accreditation practice, these appraisals and suggestions are offered:

1. Reports written for the same commission often do not share a common format. This lack of standardization presents a general difficulty in knowing how to orient any reader to a given document. Perhaps more seriously, it often leaves uncertain the question of whether or not a team dealt thoroughly with an institution in terms of every relevant accreditation standard of the respective commission, assuming there are written standards.

2. By reading the site reports alone, one often does not have a clear picture of the institution. Visiting committee reports are written apparently assuming the reader knows the institution directly or indirectly from other sources. If one assumes that site team reports are written to provide members of a commission information on which to decide on candidacy or full accreditation, then it is likely that typical readers of such reports would benefit

from having a brief description of the institution or program before launching into an evaluation of it.

3. In very few instances, did these reports cite policies or standards of the respective commissions for which they were written. It appears that most visiting teams evaluate an institution using whatever subjective judgments emerge in the team at the time of the visit. That is, the reports are generally devoid of a "bony structure"--objective evidence weighed against explicit standards. Most reports begin with sweeping judgments, rather than beginning with objective descriptions and moving to check the institution or program for evidence of meeting respective standards.

4. In contrast to the generally negative observations above, most teams eventually focus on the critical strengths and weaknesses of an institution or program. This somewhat unfettered but instinctive evaluation of an institution is more compatible with a collegial, consulting mode than with systematic checking to see if standards have been met. Thus, the reports generally reflect accrediting as being concerned more with institutional improvement than with quality assurance.

5. For all the rhetoric about the academy and the accrediting community resisting change, there is no hint of such obduracy in these reports. First, there is no evidence of philosophic bias against any of the forms of non-traditional education treated in these reports. Second, practically none of the reports concluded with recommendations that would have made disapproval for candidacy or full accreditation likely. Perhaps we are dealing primarily only with those nontraditional, undergraduate programs that had been approved. In other words, there are surely other such programs and institutions

that were not approved or were informally discouraged. While programs of instruction delivered under contract by an organization for an accredited institution have caused considerable concern in the accrediting community, none of the site reports included in this research dealt directly with such a situation.

Types of Nontraditional Undergraduate Education

The variety of undergraduate programs and institutions reflected in these site reports comprise different types of nontraditional approaches. Following are some generalizations about the programs and institutions on which this report is based.

Colleges

Site reports were used from eight private colleges with some type of nontraditional program. In addition to these eight, there was one private, religiously related university that had one school within it dedicated to competency-based curriculum, but no indication of an emphasis on off-campus, independent study.

In another case, the only significant departure from tradition was a college that takes students as college freshmen as early as the sophomore year in high school. Included also was a center developed from a closed Catholic woman's college, that concentrates on older students with provisions for independent study and recognition of prior learning. There was also a senior college with two nontraditional features: It has a contract with an agency to provide preset curricula, and it offers individualized student degree plans (or contracts).

The remaining liberal arts colleges variously emphasized weekend instruction, contract degree programs, and credit for prior learning. One was extensively involved in off-campus, military base instruction.

One junior college was established for a particular racial group, and its nontraditionality apparently is confined to this ethnic emphasis.

Senior State Institutions

There were seven reports from state supported universities in this study. Three of those institutions were found to be nontraditional in some way; the other four were quite conventional universities with relatively minor nontraditional ventures ("minor" in regard to total enrollment of the respective institutions).

The three completely nontraditional institutions have several interesting similarities as well as differences. One institution is an upper division university wholly committed to degree contracts by individual students. Another is primarily committed to thematic or interdisciplinary studies without much apparent emphasis on off-campus, independent study. The third, quoting from the site team report, was founded to be "different." It is unconventional in structure, emphasizing small colleges. Faculties apparently maintain identities both with disciplines and colleges. Again, off-campus or remote, home study was not the apparent emphasis.

In two of the four remaining cases, the traditional institutions have simply developed a single degree program emphasizing independent study. In one, a bachelor of general studies program has very liberal provisions for granting credit for a wide variety of things. The third traditional institution has ventured into off-campus instruction through several centers.

Six of these universities have single physical locations with full-time faculties. The seventh is a state supported college offering the baccalaureate on a contract degree basis through several centers scattered across the state. It has a permanent faculty but not a full complement to provide all of the students' instruction. The permanent faculty is divided into one group that helps students develop degree contracts and another group that reviews and approves the contracts.

Other State Ventures

The previous section described, with one exception, state universities that are conventional in being located at one place with a typical body of professional, academic staff. This section deals with state sponsored and supported agencies or institutions that do not have a campus and regular complement of full-time faculty. Or, if they have a full-time faculty, considerable use is made also of part-time, adjunct faculty. The nature and purpose of these agencies and institutions differ greatly. Two of them are special programs or boards developed to do one thing: assess students against preset standards and structures using predetermined means of assessment. They assess achievement and award credit toward associate and baccalaureate degrees. They may be understood as academic credentialing agencies. While they offer no formal instruction, a good deal of informal guidance and advisement occurs.

Within this group of special state ventures there are two community colleges. One of them is a somewhat conventional community college district within a state. Its nontraditionality lies in a decentralized campus made up of rented or leased facilities. It also emphasizes linking students with

a great variety of career and vocational goals. The other community college is a statewide institution offering associate degrees on a contract, competency-based, independent study basis. It emphasizes use of community resources as means of instruction.

Also among the site team reports was one on a state vocational-technical institute offering associate degrees. Though it offers an off-campus degree program, no notice was taken of this nontraditional program in the site report. There was also a site team report on a consortium of institutions within a state system of colleges and universities. The purpose of the consortium was to offer external degrees.

Military Programs

Among the 32 site reports were three on institutions that focus on some aspect of instruction for the military. One of the three is an effort by one branch of the armed services to develop an associate degree credit bank for the technical work taught by that branch of service. The report on this program was not an accreditation report, but a report by a team commissioned to determine if this branch of the service was justified in creating a degree-granting institution.

The two other reports were not site reports by peer teams, but reports by accrediting agency staff members. One was a staff report on technical courses being offered by a branch of the military. The other was on a consortium of traditional institutions working through a center to meet degree program needs on one large military base.

International Emphases

There were three reports on institutions with international emphases. One is an upper division college that allows about one half of a student's time to be spent in foreign study. It is essentially study abroad with an institutional concentration in some areas. Another institution is a college on a ship with additional study centers on several military bases. The distinctive characteristics of the third institution were particularly unclear from the report submitted. It seems to be an institution offering humanistic studies with a comparative cultures emphasis.

Engineering and Business

There were site team reports on two specialized institutions concerned only with engineering instruction in one case and engineering and business in another. The first institution is a nonprofit evening school that grants the baccalaureate in three areas of engineering. The other is a proprietary institution offering associate degrees in engineering and business through courses of instruction structured for independent or home study.

Other

Finally, there were reports from institutional licensure or chartering agencies on two institutions. One of the institutions appears to deal as an educational broker with fewer than 100 students. It is a private institution that relates student degree and instructional needs to available resources for meeting them. The other report was on an institute devoted to using community resources throughout a particular state for the education of, presumably, adult students.

Generalizations

A critical step in any analysis is to develop a classification system that allows generalizations to be made and conclusions to be drawn. After attempting to identify several dimensions for the development of such a system--such as sponsorship, clientele, organization and administration, curriculum, mode of instruction, and faculty--this researcher concluded that no one dimension or set of dimensions is clearly and consistently applicable. Of the thirty-two institutions and programs studied, sixteen were either nonprofit or proprietary and fifteen were either state or federally sponsored and supported. One was a consortium of public and private institutions.

The fundamental concern of the various institutions ranges from strongly vocationally related (in business and engineering) to strongly emphasizing personal development with little job relatedness. The clientele for the various institutions ranges from full-time enrolled students in the traditional 18-24 age group to part-time, older, employed adults.

Also the institutions are quite varied in terms of organization. Some are conventional liberal arts colleges with distinctive curricula or off-campus instruction or home study features. Some are universities with one special program or innovative school. Others are new, free-standing institutions developed solely for their innovative or nontraditional purposes. Some are essentially agencies or programs of larger institutions, such as a branch of the military or an agency of a state department of education.

Perhaps one of the better ways to generalize about the nontraditional undergraduate programs included in this study is to determine their traditionality in terms of means versus ends. By "means" is meant all the processes--curricula, instruction, administration, etc.--designed to yield

or recognize an "end" of an educated person. Traditional higher education coheres around traditionality of both means and ends. Traditional means of American higher education have usually meant some or all of the following:

1. A full-time, resident faculty with considerably more advanced degrees than the ones they confer themselves.
2. Full-time, resident students who not only take "full" course loads but also participate in campus life.
3. A campus--a given, physical location where essentially all of the instruction takes place.
4. A curriculum that intertwines testing and teaching so that students must be competent as well as in class to receive passing grades.
5. A free-standing institution governed by its own board of trustees and so able to chart its own course by its corporate will. (That is, the traditional higher education institution was not a direct agency of any larger institution--ecclesiastical, governmental, or industrial.)
6. An institution administered by people who are academics first and managers second and where most decisions, beyond relatively straightforward administrative ones, are made by the faculty as a whole.
7. An institution that provides directly for all the instruction and instructional resources the curriculum usually requires of any student. (That is, there is no intentional dependence on extrainstitutional resources such as a public library, a laboratory in industry, or the faculty and resources of another university.)

The traditional ends of undergraduate education usually include the following:

1. An in-depth understanding of at least one field of study acknowledged

by the academic world to be a discipline or field worthy of study.

2. A general understanding of at least one additional field of study.

3. General education providing the competence in communication and number skills to allow one to pursue other studies and acquaintance with the broad areas of human knowledge that educated men and women share in common.

All of these ends have as primary goals the attainment of certain knowledge and skills and a generally enhanced rationality. Spiritual, character and emotional development are important by-products not only of the formal curriculum of prescribed study, but also of the informal curriculum of living on or near a campus. At least in the minds of the faculty and the administration, the difference between product and by-product is maintained.

Perceptions will surely differ on what constitutes traditional means and ends in higher education. It is hoped that the above generalizations are close enough to the perceptions of most readers to provide a useful point of departure from which to discuss nontraditional ventures. It is important to realize that baccalaureate education has generally not been widely seen as only the acquisition of a set of competencies; rather, it has generally been conceived of as an experience with certain hoped for but not assured outcomes. Hence, accreditation, which is but a collective expression of the collegiate community, has been about evaluating institutions with those characteristics that are most likely to yield both the desired products and by-products. Traditionally, most educators would never have considered awarding the baccalaureate only for demonstrated possession of certain competencies. Thus, accreditation has generally not meant direct assurance

of minimal competency of graduates of a credentialling agency, a college. Rather accreditation has more nearly meant that a given organization is fit to join the ranks of other institutions that educate. In other words, accreditation has traditionally not been certification of certification agencies.

The traditional views began to change when collegiate degrees began to be used widely as credentials in business, industry, and government. They were no longer just academic accolades for limited use within the academy but were supposed to certify achievements related to entry into and promotion within the world of work. As the economic importance of educational credentials increased, the tangible, experience-oriented benefits of college inevitably began to diminish. It followed that individuals began to seek the most expeditious ways to obtain educational credentials which were, and are, the required tickets of entry for many jobs.

Institutional response to this phenomenon is not restricted to the nontraditional education movement. Urban universities with large evening programs for employed students and commuter community colleges say, in effect, that the benefits of a collegiate education are possible without full-time study and residence on a campus. Correspondence courses suggest that with added diligence one can learn at home as well as in the classroom. Established, traditional universities have made considerable use of adjunct, part-time faculty for years. Study off campus has not only been tolerated but encouraged: study abroad, work-study, etc. The value of intermingling work with study on the way to the baccalaureate has been encouraged through co-operative education. Direct credentialling of competence is theoretically

approved whenever a college allows students to receive credit for performance and examinations without attending class.

In short, the research has not identified any nontraditional means used by institutions in this study which has not been or is not being used in fully accredited, traditional institutions.

What then is nontraditional higher education? It may be no more or less than a valence shift. That is, the nontraditional ventures of traditional institutions are minor variations on a major theme. Only when the minor variation becomes the dominant theme does the institution become nontraditional.

For example, a traditional liberal arts college may make considerable use of credit by examination; but when it states all of its degree requirements in terms of assessable competencies and is willing to grant a degree to any demonstrably competent student without benefit of the campus experience, that institution is nontraditional. A traditional university may allow individual professors to contract with students for what they will do to earn a given grade in a course. It may even allow faculty in a certain department or school to develop contracts for what individual students have to do to receive a certain degree. Yet, if all of this takes place within a larger structure that is essentially dominated by the traditional means and ends described above, this institution is basically traditional with minor nontraditional programs.

The point is, when any given departure becomes the motif of an institution, it has reached a watershed. If an organization becomes essentially an agency just to credential students in the most expeditious manner possible, it is not an institution of higher education in the traditional sense.

Regional accreditation makes much over the point that it accredits complete institutions rather than programs. This researcher assumes that this should mean it does not accredit organizations which are essentially direct agencies of larger institutions. Such organizations typically have little institutional sovereignty or self-direction. Their fates are entirely and directly in the hands of the churchmen, generals, bureaucrats, and business executives who instigated them. Voluntary, institutional accreditation rests upon a constituency of relatively independent and autonomous institutions. By accrediting an organization, the academic community which constitutes the accrediting body is in effect reviewing the organization into a fraternity of institutions. So the most fundamentally nontraditional organization for institutional accreditation is one that is not an "institution." So long as an organization has the fundamental attributes of a self-directing, accountable institution, it is accreditable if it deals with postsecondary education no matter how divergent are its means.

What then of divergent or nontraditional ends? Divergency in ends or student outcomes has generally not been a primary concern of regional accreditation. If a postsecondary organization were an accreditable institution in terms of governance, faculty, finance, curricula, administration, and campus environment, it then had broad license about what it would require of and hope to develop in students. By maintaining some control over the forms of postsecondary education, considerable benign control was maintained over outcomes.

As there have been major departures from the traditional means and ends in conventional institutions, there have been similar departures from traditional in terms of governance or sovereignty. There was probably more

at stake than most educators realized in the growth and consolidation of statewide governance and coordination of higher education. Historically, accreditation was geared to deal with individual institutions with independent boards of control. Increasingly, however, governance of the typical state supported institution has been moved further and further from the campus. Usually the final decisions on budget, program additions, and major administrative appointments are now in the hands of centralized boards and their staffs. To the extent that traditional regional accreditation focused on independent or sovereign institutions rather than agencies and programs of larger institutions, its current willingness to recognize agencies and programs is a "nontraditional" step.

Several of the organizations reflected in the site reports used in this study do not seem to be institutions by the criterion of being free-standing, self-governing bodies. Consider, for example, whether or not a state board that awards degrees based on assessed achievement and reports in line authority to a state official is such an institution. A "college" within a branch of the military functioning essentially as a credit bank and dependent for its existence and direction on a commanding general is not an institution with its own destiny in its own hands. This observation does not mean these organizations are not worthy ventures, only that they stretch the meaning of institutional accreditation.

In closing on this point, it should be recognized that one of the great underlying tensions in our culture is the vision of a society composed of relatively autonomous institutions versus the vision of a uniform social structure under centralized authority in which local institutions are but standardized branches. In the realm of higher education, is society best

served by a varied, pluralistic collection of colleges and universities? Or would a more uniform structure with centralized state or federal direction and authority serve better? Institutional accreditation has always been part and parcel of the varied, pluralistic, decentralized, autonomous society. So the most serious question for regional accreditation may be not how readily it will accept unconventional educational practices of various institutions, but how far it will go in accrediting even the most conventional institution which does not stand relatively free. Without adequate attention to the relationship between an institution and its controlling body, accreditation can make mistakes in dealing with even traditional institutions.*

Accreditation Issues

What, if anything, concerns regional accrediting commissions about non-traditional undergraduate education? After all is said and done, this question is the crux of this study. From reading the thirty-two site reports, particular concerns of accreditation teams about nontraditional undergraduate programs and institutions as well as observations about the operation of accreditation are presented.

The most striking characteristic of these reports is how devoid they are of any apparent philosophic hesitancy about the varied manifestations of nontraditionality. In the minds of some people, accrediting staffs and the administrators and faculty they call upon to form site teams are assumed

*For a more extensive treatment of this issue, see the section on "Governance, Leadership, and Structure" in Report No. 5, "Critical Characteristics of an Accreditable Institution, Basic Purposes of Accreditation, and Nontraditional Forms of Most Concern."

to be rigid traditionalists reacting in knee-jerk fashion against any deviations from the status quo. A study of these reports reveals, on the contrary, that teams and staffs are generally enthusiastic about change and innovation. The only scolding that comes through in the site reports is of programs or institutions that failed to live up to their stated nontraditional or innovative aims. In some cases, the reports also suggest that aims outdistance resources; nevertheless, there is no indication of any basic disagreement with the aims themselves.

Rather than finding any discernible prejudice against nontraditionality in these reports, the research led to questioning the objectivity of the teams and staffs because they were so positive in their appraisals. It may be that accrediting staffs are so concerned that accreditation not appear to be rigidly traditional that they are selecting teams overly enthusiastic toward nontraditional postsecondary education. This possibility should certainly be discussed by accrediting executives even if they dismiss it as completely without foundation.

While there were three reports dealing with special programs for the military, there was only one case of a regular college delivering instruction to the military, and none of these cases seemed to cause much concern to the accrediting community. There was also little evidence in the site reports of concern about instruction delivered by one agency under contract to an accredited institution.

Another perception gained from this research is that staffs and visiting teams did not indicate any difficulty in applying current or "traditional" accreditation policies, standards, or procedures to the wide spectrum of institutions and programs represented in this study. There were very few

cases where either a visiting team or a staff representative found a fundamental inconsistency between any given standard and an institutional practice. There were, of course, cases where teams made recommendations or suggestions to institutions, but these seemed to come from the collective educational judgments of team members rather than from the direct application of a standard or illustration of a standard. It may be that team members are generally not well oriented to the policies or standards of their respective commissions because they so seldom cite them in their evaluations. Furthermore, accreditation policies and standards are so broadly written that teams may find them difficult to apply directly in specific, concrete situations. Depending on one's point of view this broadness is either laudable or questionable.

Does regional accreditation have fundamental difficulties with undergraduate nontraditional education? The site reports do not reveal such difficulties, and this perception is reinforced by the BSSR report, "A Study of the Acceptability and Negotiability of External Degrees." BSSR researchers reviewed 134 institutions that included 141 divisions hosting one or more external degree programs. Of the 141 divisions, 128 furnished information about accreditation, and 116 of these indicated they were either part of regionally accredited institutions or were themselves accredited institutions. Even if it were assumed that the other 13 institutions were accredited, these added to the single institution that reported it was not seeking accreditation, would constitute only 10 percent of the 141 external degree divisions. As pointed out in the summary of the BSSR study that is included in the reports for this project, external degrees are only a part of the nontraditional education movement. Nevertheless, if no more and

probably less than 10 percent of them are not currently accredited, this would tend to confirm that there are no major problems with accreditation of nontraditional education.

Many forms of nontraditional education reflected in the site reports for this part of the COPA project are not as radical a departure from traditional programs as are the external degree programs of the BSSR study, which require less than 25 percent of the degree work be campus-based, classroom instruction. If these external degree programs have encountered relatively little trouble with accreditation, then there is even less reason to believe that the larger spectrum of nontraditional undergraduate education has encountered significant problems with accreditation.

Probably accreditation should have more problems than it does with some of the forms of nontraditional undergraduate education. Historically accreditation has responded to the basic issues of the moment in higher education. When the definition of a college often vaguely overlapped that of preparatory schools, accreditation took a firm stand on several matters helping to crystallize the distinction. When intellectual integrity was threatened, it defended burgeoning enrollments resulting first from returning veterans and then from their offspring, accreditation responded by making "institutional improvement" its primary function.

Today the key issue is basic quality assurance. That is, the critical concern is being sure that students are reasonably literate and competent with figures and that degrees still have some "gold standard" of achievement behind them.

A second issue currently is the survival of institutions possessing a meaningful degree of independence in an era of technology, centralization,

homogenization, and standardization. A culture and economy fascinated by systems, quality control, uniformly adequate products, and mass production will inevitably be attracted to standardization, hierarchial authority, and centralization. There are few places in the world where nongovernmental voluntary accreditation exists, because there are few places with a significant sector of independent, private higher education. This country has steadfastly avoided a national ministry of education, and voluntary, institutional accreditation has been an important factor in our diverse system.

Accreditation has, for the most part, embraced only institutions, not educational agencies of noneducational operations such as the church, government, military, business, or industry. Yet, this economy rests on knowledge and skill, so most corporate bodies train, teach, and educate their employees in order to survive and compete. Our mobile society is also something of a meritocracy in which educational credentials become occupational passports. Therefore, many essentially noneducational institutions, nonprofit as well as proprietary, are increasingly interested in awarding traditional academic degrees for their own training and continuing education programs. For a number of reasons these new degree-granting agencies seek accreditation.

In addition to the emergence of education by noneducational institutions, there are the new systems and media of instruction. Briefly put, an effective system of teaching is transferable, multipliable, and person independent. By submitting to the system, one can learn. In such a technological approach, the need is no longer to have an engaging and sagacious teacher but an efficient, pleasant, and effective system. The development and deployment of such systems are not easily compatible with autonomous, traditional institutions. Neither are they fundamentally compatible with the individualism

typical of most college and university professors.

What do these current trends in our society mean for accreditation?

They likely mean that accreditation is at or approaching a major crossroads where it may either meekly accommodate to the new order or rigorously question it in terms of the basic values on which the historic academy is based.

Such questions as the following might be raised, which are entirely consistent with current policies and standards of accreditation.

1. Should an organization be accredited as an institution of higher education if it is a direct agent or subunit of an essentially noneducational institution?

2. What type of decisions should an accredited institution be able to make for itself to retain a meaningful degree of independence?

3. Is an organization that only assesses achievement and records credit for prior education an educational institution?

4. Is an organization without a faculty but with a collection of instructional systems, however conceptually and technically sophisticated, an educational institution?

5. Can an institution with all the attributes of an academy so abuse degrees by awarding them to incompetent people that it loses accreditation?

6. Is there any level of instruction beneath the dignity of a college or university?

The research for this report has identified the two most critical responsibilities of accreditation as (1) the reinforcement of our pluralistic network of relatively independent institutions and (2) the assurance of reasonable meaning for types and levels of degrees. In several ways, certain types of nontraditional education threaten these responsibilities. First, in

the name of nontraditionality, agencies of noneducational institutions are being accredited. Second, organizations that merely award credentials rather than exist as fully orb ed educational institutions are being accredited. Inevitably, these developments open the possibility that any institution in society--church, theater, legislature, business, military service, trucking firm, port authority, or whatever--could become an accredited "institution" of postsecondary education.

Three cases illustrate the concerns expressed in this study about accreditation's role in assuring quality and protecting the independence of the academic estate. The first case involves a team that reviewed an institution with a national reputation for competency based curriculum. This particular institution has done as much if not more than any other institution in the nation to translate its curriculum into terms of achievement rather than time and process. Here was the perfect opportunity for an accrediting team to review a truly nontraditional institution in terms of actual and intended results. The team could have weighed in achievement terms the meaning of that institution's degrees against the generally accepted meaning of the degrees offered. Nevertheless, the team focused on process rather than outcome.

Out of the thirty-two site reports read, very few manifested evidence that teams had examined student papers, examinations, and projects to determine their quality. To the contrary these reports indicate that teams generally do not directly assess whether or not the integrity of academic credentials is being maintained. Rather, they appear to assume this integrity if process and structural matters are in place.

On the other hand, there was one notable case where a team investigated the level of achievement expected for a B.A. or B.S. and found an institution wanting. This site team report concerned a program established in a state system of education to award associate and baccalaureate degrees based on prior education and directly assessed competence. The team reports from this particular commission are relatively systematic and substantive, and this team gave considerable attention to comparing what the program required for its respective degrees with the general meaning of such degrees, something accrediting teams should do more often.

In the team's view, a program of study that does not require a student to demonstrate competence in a specific major field should lead to either a Bachelor of General Studies or a Bachelor of Liberal Studies. The institution in this case was awarding a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies or a Bachelor of Science in Liberal Studies depending upon the number of credits earned in the arts and sciences.

In his response to the team's report, the president of the institution made the following points:

1. The use of the B.A. and B.S. was consistent with the meaning and requirements for these degrees as established by the policy-making body of the state's educational system, which authorized and controls this external degree program.

2. The titles Bachelor of Liberal Studies or Bachelor of General Studies could not be used because this same governmental agency had not authorized such degree designations and was, in fact, trying to reduce the number of degree titles in use in the state.

Similar reasoning appeared in the third illustration, a site team report not formally included in this study. In this case, the team reviewed a credit-banking activity of a branch of the military. In several areas where the organization did not meet the spirit or letter of the accrediting commission's policies and standards, the team showed no reluctance in yielding to the military establishment as the controlling order.

From these three cases, two interesting issues emerge about accreditation of nontraditional undergraduate education:

1. Accrediting teams need to be sensitive to opportunities to judge results as well as processes. This is particularly true when the non-traditional institution has committed itself to emphasizing student competencies in degree programs.

2. As businesses, professional associations, or educational divisions of governments become involved in degree-granting activities, care must be taken to insure that proper procedures of governance and the historic prerogatives of the academy are not sacrificed. Long-term social needs are served when accreditation defends the relative independence and autonomy of the academy whenever it is threatened by direct encroachment from religious, governmental, and business organizations.

Conclusions

Out of this review of these thirty-two reports and reflection on the issues, the following conclusions are offered:

1. Accrediting teams and staffs do not appear to be concerned about the variety of nontraditional means and ends being used by institutions and programs in terms of their meeting current, conventional accreditation standards.

2. There appears to be more at stake in the approval of certain types of nontraditional higher education than the accrediting community realizes.

a. The approval of individualized, contract degree programs could remove the last remnants of any comparability and common minimal requirements for degrees, not only among but within institutions.

b. The approval of organizations as "institutions" that are extensions of larger, noneducational institutions is inconsistent with the basic principles of accreditation.

If these conclusions are correct, accreditation for all its assets and strengths is faced with difficulty in two areas. First, it may lose any possible way to assure quality as related to the meaning of degrees. Degrees could become as different as the individuals who hold them, and if that happens their social value will be diminished and the academy itself weakened.

At the same time by recognizing agencies and organizations of larger, noneducational institutions as accreditable postsecondary education institutions, accreditation will open the gates for business, industry, government, and churches to grant the academy's credentials. This encroachment is no more socially desirable than government infringing on the role and prerogatives of the press. The foundation of nongovernmental accreditation is autonomous institutions meeting the varied needs of their respective constituencies. Academic freedom is related to free inquiry, which thrives best in independent rather than dependent institutions.

The long-term public interest is best served by keeping all diverse institutions out from under the powerful sway of government. The opportunity for all kinds of groups--religious and otherwise--to give educational

expression to their values is their opportunity to support colleges identified with but not absolutely controlled by them. Such opportunity is enhanced by accreditation more than it would be by a government ministry. To accredit agencies of noneducational institutions flies in the face of a fundamental purpose of accreditation.

In summary, institutional accreditation has two major responsibilities before it:

1. It must assure itself that the degrees being offered by institutions, traditional as well as nontraditional, are valid in terms of required student achievements compared with the general meaning of the respective degrees.

2. It must assure itself that the nontraditional organization is indeed an "institution" in terms of autonomy, lay representation on its governing boards, and evidence of stability or permanence.

Report No. 5

CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ACCREDITABLE
INSTITUTION, BASIC PURPOSES OF ACCREDITATION,
AND NONTRADITIONAL FORMS OF MOST CONCERN

By John Harris

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Introduction

This report is intended to identify the pivotal or critical issues in the accreditation of nontraditional postsecondary education. At the February 1978 meeting of the Advisory Committee, the Presidents' Review Panel, and the staff of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation Project on Nontraditional Education, several suggestions were made. When reduced to their barest essentials, the suggestions were along two lines:

1. Not all nontraditional forms and approaches cause any real concern in the accrediting community. The purpose of this project is, therefore, to try to identify and focus on those that cause the greatest concern.
2. Rather than developing a separate set of standards and procedures for nontraditional postsecondary education, the project should identify the critical characteristics of any accreditable postsecondary educational institution.

All through the work and discussions of this project has run a concern about the fundamental purposes of institutional accreditation. In some ways accreditation policy represents the conventional wisdom of the academy (at any one point in history) about quality. The emergence of nontraditional forms of education has raised questions about many of the working philosophies and assumptions of accreditation. The nontraditional movement in a number

of instances says that students may become proficient without this or that conventional requirement or that a new practice is more effective and efficient than a conventional one. Almost any time a social institution, such as the accrediting community, is faced with significant changes, it will reexamine and attempt to clarify its foundational purposes. Thus, a review and reassertion of these basic purposes will be included in this paper, which will seek to delineate three specific areas:

1. The critical characteristics of an accreditable institution.
2. The fundamental purposes of institutional accreditation.
3. The types of nontraditional postsecondary education that cause the most concern among accrediting executives.

Critical Characteristics

When the concept of identifying the critical characteristics of a postsecondary institution was first considered, the original thought was to identify the essential elements of a good institution. During the discussions with accrediting professionals, a more operational adjective was adopted--"accreditable."¹ So the intent of this section is to delineate

¹Logically, "accreditable institutions" is a subcategory of the class--"good institutions." It is theoretically possible for there to be good institutions which are not accreditable. On the other hand, one would assume accreditable institutions should be good ones. In the last analysis, accreditable institutions will have to provide means by which they can be judged externally. An institution may be good in any number of ways, but not amenable to the judgment of outsiders. Furthermore, accreditation does not involve the judgment of any outsider by any extrinsic standard; it means an institution makes itself amenable to the criteria and procedures of the association in which it seeks membership. Therefore, in the last analysis, accreditation means acceptance into a membership. The criteria of membership are the collective expressions of that membership. In a very real sense, those criteria are the common values and practices of the member institutions. Hence, the criteria are more in flux than static because they result from the temporal agreements of a dynamic membership.

the critical characteristics of an accreditable postsecondary educational institution.

It is important to note that this list of characteristics does not include a discussion of research and public service functions. This omission is understandable in a study of accreditation of nontraditional postsecondary education where the emphasis, almost without exception, is on education--either instruction or the evaluation of learning experiences. In this study there were no institutions or programs which offered technical assistance or conducted funded or departmental research in nontraditional ways.

Goals and Objectives

If there is any one component of an accreditable institution on which there appears to be full agreement by accrediting executives, it is "clearly stated institutional goals and objectives." This factor is critical to accreditation because institutions are assessed against their own purposes rather than a single external standard. However, it remains unclear to this researcher how far accreditation is willing to go in accepting the stated purposes, particularly in the matter of the meaning of the various degrees. How seriously most postsecondary institutions actually take their stated goals and objectives is also unclear. At best such statements more often explain in general terms what an institution is doing rather than disciplining it in terms of what it ought to do.

What are "clearly stated" goals and objectives? By "clearly" could be meant "explicitly." By explicit statements is usually meant statements put forth in concrete, operational terms so as to be least susceptible to

misunderstanding. Two general discriminating signs of explicit versus vague statements of goals and objectives are as follows:

1. Explicit statements tend to use active rather than passive verbs.
2. Vague statements tend to make liberal use of adjectives and adverbs.

In addition to being explicit, a statement of goals and objectives ought to be comprehensive. By comprehensive is meant that there is a reasonable match between declarations and operations. That is, there are goals or objectives for every significant activity of the institution or an activity for each goal or objective. A comprehensive set of goals and objectives means there is no operation of the institution which cannot be judged by its direct or contributory fulfillment of a goal or objective.

Consistency among goals and objectives is critical. If they are explicitly stated in operational terms and complete or comprehensive, internal consistency among goals and objectives will be quite apparent. Unexplicit and incomplete statements of goals and practices often give the appearance of consistency when, in fact, an institution has programs, commitments, and aspirations that work against one another. An example of this inconsistency is when an institution aspires to traditional academic prestige but at the same time practices essentially open admissions.

Finally, any genuinely respected set of goals and objectives are held tentatively, subject to periodic review and revision. Provision is thereby made to change aspirations in light of experience. Experience may reveal other needs than those initially perceived or different realities of talent and resources than those originally assumed.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to suggest that an accreditable institution has explicit, comprehensive, and tentative goals and objectives.² In explicitness there is the necessary condition for accountability: assessability of processes in light of observable results. In comprehensiveness there is assurance that no significant matter will be left to chance. In tentativeness there is provision for deliberate, conscious reform and reshaping of an institution based on the experience of its programs and activities. Explicit, comprehensive, and tentative goals and objectives provide benchmarks by which an institution may govern itself and by which it may be judged. Therefore, the first critical characteristic of an accreditable institution is as follows:

The institution has explicit, comprehensive, and consistent goals and objectives subject to periodic review and revision.

Governance, Leadership, and Structure

A historic dilemma for higher education is how it can receive support from a patron or host and not be completely dominated by the benefactor. In medieval times, universities were never completely at peace with either their king or the church. Neither are modern day universities completely independent of their sponsors, whether communist governments, democratic legislatures and executives, or private patrons such as churches and foundations. Yet especially in the free world, efforts are made to insure considerable independence of the academy. Voluntary accreditation plays

²The writer is indebted to Dr. Joseph Hammock, University of Georgia, for the criteria of explicitness, comprehensiveness, and tentativeness.

a significant role in the preservation of this independence in the United States. Rather than a national ministry of education, this society has opted in higher education for a variety of indirect controls, one of which is voluntary, institutional accreditation. It should be noted, perhaps, that the nonexistence of a national ministry is probably due as much to the "states rights" issue as to the ideal of academic independence.

Also associated with American academic independence is American pluralism. The people of the United States, of course, are pluralistic in national origin, ethnic, religious, and regional differences. Increasingly this pluralism is becoming more valued, and the melting-pot, homogenous perspective less so. Supporting and being supported by this culture pluralism is the diversity of American higher education institutions. There are colleges that represent the spectrum of religious beliefs. There are colleges that continue to reflect various ethnic heritages. In effect, there are colleges of the working class as well as of the more affluent.

Historically, something of a choice has been made in American higher education, showing a preference for the advantages of a diverse collection of relatively autonomous institutions, often related to particular constituencies, rather than a uniform, standardized system responsible to a central governing body. The emergence of statewide coordination and governance and the extensive involvement of the federal government in education now raise fundamental questions about the historic commitment to independence and diversity. In addition to the centralization trends in the political sphere, there are technological pressures for standardization. Whenever

technology has been applied to a sector of industry, two consequences seem to follow:

1. Operating units such as farms or plants tend to become fewer but larger.

2. Hierarchical authority structures tend to emerge to maintain standardization and to coordinate the larger units.

Technology is essentially capital- rather than labor-intensive. In farming this means a large amount of capital is invested in expensive machinery and fertilizer on the front end of an operation with relatively small expenditures on labor during the process. The capital investments required necessitate larger operations.

The serious introduction of technology into education produces the same result. Nowhere is this more evident than in the operation of the British Open University. The initial costs of developing a course are so great that, except in the physical sciences, course design and contents are not changed for five years.

How then will the serious application of technology to postsecondary instruction affect the academy in this country and our system of voluntary accreditation? Before attempting to answer this question, it should be made clear that technology is not just gadgets but a different way of organizing human activity. The serious application of technology to education does not mean just increased use of slide projectors or even computer terminals; rather, it means the development of complete instructional systems inclusive of the instructor's role. To a technologist the ideal system is not "person dependent," but is transferrable; that is, it can be replicated by others and, hence, is "person independent."

The introduction of such approaches into the academy means several things:

1. While the instructor may contribute to a system in its developmental stage, his or her freedom to alter the system once it is in place is limited.
2. More extensive professional time will be spent in developing systems than in expediting them.
3. Developed systems will need to be marketed on a wide scale in order to pay for themselves. Thus, a developer may contract with a number of delivery units--accredited colleges--for operation of instructional systems.

Inevitably these developments mean accreditation will be confronted with new alternatives to collegial governance within institutions. For one thing, it will be faced with networks of shared services and systems among institutions. Particularly given the long-term economic pinch foreseen by many for higher education, institutions will increasingly have to share, rent, lease, or purchase services they are not in the best position to develop or deliver themselves. In short, the autonomous, freestanding, self-contained, comprehensive institution may not only be inconsistent with current political tides but also with the economic and technological trends. In this writer's opinion, the academy and accreditation are in the midst of a cultural dilemma: Our appetite for the benefits of technology set against our yearning to be relatively free and independent.

While most of our recent experience with technology has meant standardization, centralization, and hierarchial authority, it may be well to remind ourselves that these conditions may not predict the future.

In fact, "advanced" cultures tolerate more diversity than do "primitive" ones. The trend in computers is to smaller ones rather than larger ones. More developments such as SOLINET, which provides a computer based inter-library exchange in the southeastern U. S., could mean that institutions may be freed from some of their financial burdens such as that of a comprehensive library, to target their resources on the improvement of things unique to each of them.

The problem then is how to use the best of the traditions of academic governance, leadership, and structure in the contemporary academy, and hence in accreditation. Rather than just moving with the flow of the trends of the moment, accreditation might best serve by asserting those values and traditions which have served the academy well in the past. If it is believed that the American academy best serves society in the long run by remaining somewhat independent and diverse, then accreditation must commit itself to helping to preserve this independence and diversity. Such a commitment means that the emphasis in governance will be upon maintaining:

1. Some degree of institutional sovereignty and autonomy.
2. Reasonable independence from a sponsoring agency such as a church, branch of government or the military, or a private business.

A current critical problem for the academic estate is that government, business, professional associations, and unions may become extensively involved in awarding degrees. A historic tradition of American higher education is that only academic institutions offer academic degrees and that academic institutions are not direct agencies of noneducational institutions. Thus, accreditation has required lay representation on governing boards rather than just on advisory boards.

Perhaps the concerns about the extent of commitment to the academy's relative independence from sponsoring agencies are clearer when framed as questions to be asked about any institution applying for accreditation.

The questions might be as follows:

1. Is title to property and other pertinent resources vested in a separate corporation, the degree-granting institution?
2. Is the educational activity merely a line responsibility in the organizational chart of a noneducational, sponsoring agency?
3. Is there sufficient distribution of authority and responsibility among the constituents of the institution (governing board, administration, and faculty) to give reasonable assurance that compromises of academic integrity would be promptly reported to the accrediting commission?

Associated with governance is leadership. The day-to-day execution of governing board policies in administrative procedures and decisions is critical to any academic institution. Realizing that any institution is unlikely to be better than those who administer it, accreditation has usually sought some evidence that chief administrators are competent for their assigned tasks and manifest appreciation not only for the purpose of their institution but for education in general. An accreditable postsecondary institution is therefore one led by persons who evidence educational preparation, experience, and administrative competence commensurate with the level and type of institution they administer.

The matter of organizational structure is also important, especially that aspect of structure which nurtures academic and institutional integrity. The point is, accredited institutions are largely left to themselves to assure quality in the achievement of their students and graduates.

Accreditation reviews usually occur only every ten years. So the emphasis is on a structure with appropriate checks and balances that will, in the long run, have a self-correcting influence on institutional temptations such as the lowering of academic standards to maintain or increase enrollments. The basic assumption of the accreditation process seems to be that if a faculty possessing the proper credentials is significantly involved in designing curricula and setting graduation requirements and is unfettered in the assessment of each student's work, that faculty will maintain acceptable academic standards. If an appropriate structure of academic checks and balances is in place, the institution can be trusted to operate unmonitored for a decade.

There are two factors which raise questions for this researcher about such an assumption. First, it was better suited to the days of a seller's than a buyer's market. When there was a relative abundance of able students in comparison to the number of spaces available, it was not as hard to make negative decisions about student performance as it is in times of decreasing enrollments.

Second, the assumption may be more valid for traditional and historically excellent institutions than for others. That is, when there is a collegium of outstanding scholars whose national reputation in scholarship and research to some extent depends on the performance of their students, the assumption has a good chance of working. But those institutions in which the current and historic emphases have not been on excellence and scholarship are more vulnerable to the erosion of standards. This vulnerability may be particularly acute in relatively single-purpose institutions which do not have the counterbalancing forces of different disciplines

reinforcing one another. Many of the nontraditional institutions never have a full-time faculty from which a solid collegium can be developed. Often faculty members in such institutions are adjunct to that institution while full time with another. Hence, their loyalties are divided.

All of this is to say the following:

1. Because accreditation commissions cannot monitor institutions every few months, they try to promote academic structures and organizations with appropriate checks and balances intended to maintain quality through institutional self-correction.

2. Single-purpose institutions, such as those offering only doctoral degrees in education, do not usually have the arrangements that supposedly provide this viable system of checks and balances.

3. As such institutions are accredited, they may be required to establish more explicit systems of quality assurance than institutions with more conventional checks and balances.

In this section, governance, leadership, and structure have been discussed. In the matter of governance, sovereignty and autonomy along with lay representation were stressed. While the matter of assessing the executive leadership of an institution may be nebulous and vague, it is widely acknowledged that institutions rarely outperform their leaders. Accreditable institutions should have leaders who possess levels of education and experience commensurate with the level and purpose of the institution and who are committed to the historic purposes and values of the academy. Finally, the organization or structure of the institution should evidence a workable system of checks and balances to provide

an ongoing means of institutional self-correction, particularly in maintaining appropriate standards of student work.

In light of these considerations, an accreditable postsecondary educational institution has the following critical characteristics of governance, leadership, and structure:

The institution is relatively independent and has significant lay representation on its governing board. Its executive leadership has experience and education commensurate with the level and purpose of the institution and evidences commitment to the values and heritage of the academy. There is a system of operational checks and balances which is effective in self-correcting the institution in terms of its purposes and is particularly influential in curricular planning and the setting of degree requirements.

Validity of Degrees

The valuing of academic degrees and the valuing of the academy go hand in hand. The debasement of degrees cannot be disassociated from the debasement of the academy, and to some extent, degrees are less esteemed because the academic life has lost much of its general lustre and prestige in our society. Degrees are also less esteemed because there are so many of them; they have become relatively common in the last two decades. In a number of cases, they are being conferred on individuals whom the "home folks" doubt deserve them. This situation is in contrast to earlier days when generally the most able and industrious went off to college and came back with degrees.

We are in the midst of an era when there is widespread doubt about the literacy of many high school graduates; yet many colleges and universities have become essentially open-door institutions. Many of these have begun

remedial programs in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The lessening of admissions requirements comes to American higher education at the very time it has reduced the number of commonly required courses for graduation. The practice of senior comprehensive examinations is for the most part history. This state of affairs is especially precarious for American higher education because the pool of traditional college students (18- to 22-year-olds) will decline absolutely and steadily after 1981.

When a large proportion of colleges and universities do not have explicit, common, and minimal admission or exit requirements in terms of directly assessed student achievements, the general situation is set for a serious erosion of standards. This writer believes that this is the day for accreditation. That is, the need is critical to assure that the various levels and types of academic degrees have some nonreducible, common meaning in terms of student achievement. A social institution such as the academy, which will not police itself in preserving the meaning of its credentials, lays the groundwork for its demise. If the accrediting community does not take this issue up, the academy as a whole will either have to find some other means of doing so or witness a further decline in respect for its accolades, a decline which will inevitably contribute tellingly to the general lowering of respect for the academy itself.

An accreditable institution, therefore, is one that by some externally assessable means assures the larger academic community and the general public that its degrees are supported by requisite student achievements and masteries. This assurance is closely linked with the necessary structure of checks and balances discussed in the previous section. Accreditation has depended

almost entirely on the "proper" processes of governance, leadership, and structure to maintain the integrity of degrees. The nontraditional institutions and programs force accreditation to reexamine these assumptions. That is, institutions and programs without these historic and conventional arrangements claim to award degrees to individuals with achievements equivalent of those graduating from traditional institutions. Accreditation teams, therefore, will have to review degree requirements more in terms of assessable, student achievements. Furthermore, the means by which student achievements are evaluated against the criteria of degree requirements will have to be delineated more elaborately and definitively. Accreditation teams will then have to concentrate more on examining student work samples and determining if the achievements required for various degrees are commensurate with the respective degrees.

A concern for direct assessment of student achievement rather than institutional processes and structures should not be confined to nontraditional institutions. The traditional institutions must eventually "count the horse's teeth" rather than just assume that appropriate achievements result from given processes. Furthermore, as the quest for students intensifies, accreditation may have to concern itself as much with exit standards as it once did with admissions standards.

An accreditable institution is one with valid and reliable means of assuring that its graduates are as accomplished as the degrees they hold signify. The more conventional an institution's system of academic checks and balances, the less it may be expected to have a complete system for assuring minimal results. Nevertheless, all institutions should make some

provision for checking to see if its process and structure actually produce the intended results.

On the other hand, the less conventional a structure of checks and balances an institution has, the more complete should be its system of direct assessment of achievement. For example, an institution without a full-time, residential collegium of faculty and offering only one or a few graduate degree programs nontraditionally should have an elaborate, definitive system of direct quality assurance. At a minimum this includes the following:

1. An explicit statement of all the achievements expected for each degree offered.
2. A description of the assessment procedures used to certify these achievements.
3. Evidence that the procedures are used consistently in the awarding of degrees.

In regard to the validity of degrees, an accreditable institution does the following:

The institution requires student achievements for its respective degrees commensurate with the general meaning of those degrees; it has in place a systematic means to assure that students meet the degree requirements; and it provides evidence that its system of quality assurance is valid and faithfully employed.

Adequate Resources

Another critical component of an accreditable institution is having adequate resources to meet its goals and objectives. First and foremost this means a faculty with academic credentials and experience commensurate

with the level and type of instruction they offer. For example, it is obviously questionable to have a faculty awarding degrees beyond the level they typically possess themselves. It is also generally assumed that the best assurance of quality scholarship and research by students at the graduate level is a faculty directly involved in scholarship. The typical--but to be sure not the only--evidence of this is publication in appropriate professional and scholarly journals. An institution emphasizing professional or technical knowledge and skill in students, likewise, should have faculty members who possess such knowledge and skill at a high level of mastery. Furthermore, it is generally assumed that such a faculty should have had work experience relevant to the career goals of their students.

What is true of adequate and relevant faculty resources for the purpose and level of the program offered is also true of instructional materials, reference sources, laboratories, general instructional space, and basic fiscal support. It should be noted that in several studies of differences among institutions, their graduates' average performance on achievement tests are mainly accounted for by the average differences of the students admitted rather than differences in institutional treatments. That is, most studies do not show any significant correlation between student outcomes and institutional treatments. In effect, then, a "good" institution is more nearly defined by the type of students it admits and the level of achievement it requires for the award of its various degrees than by any measurements of its resources.

On the other hand, it is generally accepted that there are floors of resources and fiscal support below which quality is eroded and academic work becomes debilitatingly difficult. So while the quality of an institution

cannot be measured directly or precisely in terms of richness of its resources, no one doubts that there are irreducible minimums. Obviously, there are many disputes as to what these minimums are. In any case, the accrediting community long ago dropped any reliance on precise, quantitative measures of what is minimally required. Accreditation now seems to depend in this area almost entirely on the subjective judgment of peer review teams and duly established commissions, resulting in the following critical characteristic of an accreditable institution:

The institution has adequate human, physical, and fiscal resources to accomplish its purposes as judged by academic peers.

Stability

The very term "institution" connotes solidness, permanence, stability, perpetuity. Part of the philosophy of accreditation emphasizes assurance of continuity. If American society were committed to a national ministry of education or a national academy of arts, letters, and sciences, continuity might be vested therein. Without such centralized entities, autonomous, pluralistic institutions are expected to provide the various threads of continuity in the intellectual and scientific expressions of our culture. Furthermore, in a culture with throw-away containers, ad hoc organizations, and replaceable components, there may be an implicit expectation of permanence in some spheres of life--such as education.

Concern for students is related to concern for stability. Because degrees are awarded by institutions rather than a ministry of education, it does not seem to be in the best interest of students to accredit institutions unlikely to exist within a few years. Who would then back their

credits and degrees? Accrediting bodies, therefore, have sought to recognize only those institutions with a reasonable expectation of continuing, while avoiding dealing with institutions without the leadership, consistency, and resources to predict stability. The accrediting community has a justifiable aversion to institutions that are intentionally "quick in and quick out," that is, organizations purposefully designed to exploit a given market, take its profits, and pull out for other ventures. Such institutions do not represent the prevailing values of the academy.

An acceptable institution, therefore, must have the following characteristic:

The institution displays evidence of high probability of stability and permanence.

Students and Programs

As discussed earlier, a fundamental feature of American higher education is the presence of diverse institutions relating to pluralistic groups in the country. Obviously related to this characteristic is the expectation that institutions will take into account the particular needs, talents, and aspirations of their students.

While there is the expectation that accredited institutions will require achievements of the level and type generally associated with the degrees they award, it is also expected that they will not admit students who do not have reasonably good chances of reaching those achievements through the normal patterns of collegiate study. If there is an inclination to admit students where the odds are against them reaching those achievements through the normal avenues, then accreditable institutions will provide alternative

means of helping such students reach the proficiencies required for their respective degrees.

While the primary purpose of a postsecondary educational institution is education, it is now widely accepted that colleges and universities have certain noncurricular responsibilities to students. For example, it is not enough to offer a variety of majors with their respective career implications; an accreditable institution is also expected to make available competent and objective educational and career counseling. This is not to suggest that institutions must neglect educational concerns to provide mental health, pastoral, and parenting services. Rather, institutions are expected to provide those student services that a conscientious commitment to their institutional goals and objectives logically calls for. It is difficult to imagine any institution, however dedicated to precise instruction in technical matters and/or assessment of student competencies for appropriate credentials, that would not be expected to provide some "noneducative" services in order to meet its larger educational goals.

Therefore an accreditable institution is one that demonstrates the following:

There is a manifest correlation between the institution's program and the needs, interests, and aspirations of its students, and provision is made for those student services which are logically related to the institution's mission as well as the students' educational needs.

Integrity

Integrity means that an institution is in reality what it says it is in theory. It is consistency between advertising and practice. In other words, there is a one-to-one relationship between word and deed. Fulfillment

of the foregoing six critical characteristics of an accreditable institution would certainly connote integrity, but it is a quality that merits separate attention.

There are two major tangible characteristics of integrity in a post-secondary educational institution. One is that the institution proclaims its goals and objectives in unambiguous and observable terms. As discussed in the first characteristic, this means its goals and objectives are such that they can be assessed. Furthermore, it means that the institution fully discloses itself. That is, it does not have covert agendas or questionable bookkeeping. Students are fully informed about the institution's rules, regulations, income, and expenditures. If the institution emphasizes a given religious, political, or racial theory or a particular set of values, such an emphasis is clearly declared. In the last analysis, every nuance and idiosyncrasy cannot be made manifest; yet there must be intent within the institution to be clear about its rules, to abide by them, and to apply them fairly. Also, the institution candidly discloses its financial circumstances. Such disclosures should always be manifest in the institution's publications.

A second tangible characteristic of integrity is a set of procedures by which the institution assesses itself against its goals and objectives. Having goals and objectives without a systematic means of determining whether they are being realized or not is fundamentally dishonest. So institutional integrity means having a system in place and working that helps the institution alter practices to meet goals and objectives or alter goals and objectives in light of experience. Ideally, then, accreditation reviews should concentrate on examining evidence of the institution's total

effectiveness as drawn from this ongoing system of institutional self-evaluation.

Therefore, an accreditable institution is as follows:

The institution manifests its integrity by assessable goals and objectives, full disclosure of its codes of practice, sound fiscal practices, ethical advertising and student recruitment, consistent application of its codes, and an ongoing, systematic means of institutional self-evaluation against the criteria of its stated goals and objectives.

Purposes of Accreditation

In dealing with the critical characteristics of an accreditable rather than a good institution, the purposes of accreditation were inevitably treated or reflected. Nevertheless, a direct and separate reassertion of the purposes of accreditation seems appropriate.

Accreditation in the United States is essentially institutional membership in a voluntary association of institutions. The authority of this accreditation is the democratically expressed will of member institutions, not the fiat of a government agency. Hence, the goals and purposes of accreditation change as the collective will of the membership changes. That will, in turn, change with new circumstances of new days as well as with changes in the composition of the membership per se. As such, the principles and policies of accreditation are not like regulations and executive orders of a large and distant body, but are essentially the rules of membership in a voluntary peer-group association.

It should be noted that "voluntary" is now less volitional than it was earlier in accreditation history. Regional, institutional accreditation originally was the banding together of relatively strong and like-minded

colleges and universities. By closing ranks with one another and excluding essentially preparatory schools, often called "colleges," it was voluntary association for mutual improvement and protection from political or religious intrusion.

With the advent of significant numbers of federal dollars for higher education came the need to discriminate among institutions claiming equal shares. The ready and defensible discriminator was accreditation. In addition to determining eligibility for federal funds, accreditation has become a usual requirement for private institutions to receive state tuition assistance. Furthermore, most private donors and foundations give only to accredited institutions. With so much aid available from so many sources, a postsecondary institution's survival might very well depend on access to such funds. Therefore, accreditation may be nominally voluntary but has become economically compulsory.

This situation leaves accreditation in another serious dilemma. On one hand, it is the collective will of a membership. On the other hand, it functions at least indirectly, as an agent of government in the matter of eligibility for federal and often state funds. In expressing the will of the membership, an accrediting agency is expected to promote and protect the interests of the academy. As a quasi-agent of government, it is expected to protect the interests of the public. While in some ultimate and ideal sense, the interests of the academy and the public are consonant, they often are not as the academy's interests are asserted by academics on one hand and the public's by bureaucrats on the other.

It might be helpful to review why, in addition to the usually presumed reasons, institutions wish to be accredited. First, as already pointed out,

there is the matter of federal dollars. Practically all of the many federal student assistance programs require that recipients be enrolled in accredited institutions, and federal programs involving institutional assistance require accreditation. Second, state tuition grant programs for students in private institutions require accreditation. Third, most private foundations and corporate grants are restricted to regionally accredited institutions. Fourth, professional and specialized accrediting bodies usually have regional accreditation as a prerequisite to their recognition and accreditation. Fifth, transferring as a student from an unaccredited to an accredited institution is harder than if the original institution is accredited. Sixth, it is much more difficult to be admitted to most graduate and postbaccalaureate professional schools if one is a graduate of an unaccredited institution. Seventh, many state licensing and approval agencies exempt regionally accredited institutions from their own review process. Eighth, a large number of professional organizations and state licensing laws for certain professions require that applicants for certification and/or licensing hold degrees from accredited institutions.

Before discussing the purposes accrediting professionals believe accreditation ought to serve, some observations about the future of accreditation seem in order, given the current reasons institutions seek it, its being caught between its membership and government, and the growth of nontraditional education. First, the diversity of membership may have become so great that no one institution or type of institution feels strong identity with regional accreditation. Second, the heavy reliance of

government on accreditation to establish eligibility for funds may be too great to sustain a voluntary membership approach and independent style of operation. As the policies and procedures of accreditation move closer to those of public agencies and as the nature of institutions becomes more diverse in form and purpose, various sectors of the postsecondary education community may break away from current accreditation bodies.

Finally, it is still very unclear what effect state governance and coordination is having upon accreditation, particularly as related to charter and licensure. The emergence of nontraditional higher education just at the time institutions are beginning to compete in the "markets" for students will intensify the pressure on accreditation caught between a membership and government, federal and state.

There are at least two aspects of the nontraditional movement that add to the growing confusion over the purposes and nature of voluntary accreditation. One of them is the request for accreditation by agencies and programs of nonacademic institutions. As branches of federal and state governments, professional associations, business and industrial corporations, and other voluntary associations begin to validate their training and education programs with degrees, they will seek accreditation. If this particular nontraditional trend grows and becomes a part of accreditation, it could, in this writer's opinion, completely unravel the historic fabric of accreditation.

The other aspect of nontraditional education that will accentuate the accrediting community's problems are contract degree programs, particularly those heavily dependent on individualized, personal development motifs. Though institutions seek the validation of accreditation for such programs,

the very philosophies of the programs are antithetical to rational assessment, third-party evaluation, and preset structure not only of process but also of common minimal outcomes. At the very time institutions have growing economic self-interest in accreditation, they are increasingly tempted to adopt a "marketing approach" to student recruitment, which in many instances could mean the most credit for the least time, effort, and money. Acceptance of the resulting highly individualized degree programs leaves no place for external assessment of quality.

As are most other institutions in the industrial and postindustrial world, the academy is accustomed to growth: more each year. If, as predicted by many, the 1980s bring the steady or declining state for higher education and its accrediting community, they will bring a new set of problems. The radically different economic and demographic environment of higher education coupled with the emerging nontraditional forms of postsecondary education will produce a major tension between accreditation's historic role and the self-interest of institutions desiring accreditation.

Every social institution has its rallying flags: those values or goals around which the current troops will march. These are the hopes and perspectives of those who carry on the work of the institution day in and day out. Accreditors know full well that some applicants for accreditation have different purposes in mind from their own. Furthermore, representatives of member institutions will often have a third perspective on accreditation, different from both accrediting staffs and applying institutions. Nevertheless, the professional staffs in accreditation probably have the broadest views of accreditation's possibilities. While their statements of purpose

may, in some cases, be more what they hope accreditation will do than what it actually does, such hopes inevitably shape current accreditation practice and future directions.

What then are the basic purposes of accreditation for accrediting executives? Tersely put they appear to be the following in order of importance:

1. Institutional improvement.
2. Quality assurance.
3. Assurance of institutional integrity.
4. Maintenance of independence of the academic estate.

A major by-product of accreditation is the continuing education of faculty and administrators in the larger and more general issues of post-secondary education. This education is accomplished in two ways. First, through a comprehensive institutional self-study, a significant proportion of an institution's academic and professional staff are drawn out of their usual and often narrow pursuits to think about the institution as a whole. Second, the use of visiting peer review teams results in a cross-pollination of ideas and practices among institutions.

Institutional Improvement

Institutional improvement seems to be acknowledged unanimously as the primal purpose of institutional accreditation. Thus, a self-study is as much for internal reappraisal of an institution by its own people as it is for evidence on which outsiders determine if accreditation standards or criteria are being met. Furthermore, the standards are written more as guides or principles of good practice than as evaluative criteria. In

reviewing team reports on nontraditional institutions, it was evident in this study that team members saw themselves more as consultants than evaluators. Their comments and suggestions often emphasized how a given institution could realize its goals and generally improve itself.

This emphasis on helping institutions improve rather than on detecting charlatanism bespeaks an assumption of trust and faith. It suggests that accreditation has developed in and is nurtured more by a collegial, fraternal environment than one of adversarial, litigious relationships. The accrediting community's modes of operation, its policies, and the written work of review teams are founded on trust. Except for the most questionable institutions, the work of accreditation is usually more consultative than evaluative and assumes that member and applicant institutions generally intend to do what is right. When institutions fail to do the proper thing, the assumption seems to be that the failure is due to lack of understanding or circumstance rather than questionable intention.

The traditional foundation of trust and honorable intentions will come under new pressures in the changed circumstances of the 1980s, which will surely find many institutions short of students. Also, certain types of nontraditional institutions appear to march to a different drummer from that of the traditional academy. For the first time, regional accreditation is dealing with institutions avowedly operated for profit and with institutions trying to find the most direct, least encumbered route to the awarding of various academic credentials. It is now dealing with agencies that are appendages of larger institutions, the primary purpose of which is not education. Because of these changed circumstances, this researcher concludes that improvement was more compatible with other times: Times

when there were enough qualified students to go around, when the academy was more nearly an "establishment" of fully orbéd academic institutions, when growth was the underlying economic and social current, when entrepreneurship and marketing were not an acknowledged part of academic life as they now are in a number of established, traditional institutions as well as some of the newer nontraditional ones.

Quality Assurance

For the most part, assuring quality means assuring that accredited institutions do not debase the academic currency--certificates and degrees. This purpose was dealt with at length earlier in the section on "Critical Characteristics." The central point to be emphasized is that accreditation has a responsibility to see that academic credentials convey common meanings, principally by representing minimal levels of achievement. Accreditation has historically attempted to do this by determining if structure, process, and personnel are adequate to assure maintenance of academic standards. The basic idea was that proper academic structures and personnel would uphold academic standards on their own without continuous, outside monitoring. How well these "proper" academic structures and processes ever assured minimally acceptable results is questionable. Nevertheless, the acceptance of institutions without even these conventional structures and arrangements makes imperative for accrediting standards some type of quality assurance more in the form of direct assessment of results.

There is a continuum of approaches to assuring validity of degrees. The traditional one calls for a highly credentialled faculty with the freedom to work its collective will and judgment supported by a rich array

of certain forms of academic organization and governance as well as the usual instructional, facility, and fiscal resources. The other end of the continuum is a comprehensive evaluation system that can effectively and reliably assess student performance and products without regard to how and when they were required. As suggested earlier in this report, an accreditable institution should have some system in place by which it assures the validity of its degrees. For the very traditional university, this system may take the form of checks and balances provided by a full-time residential, appropriately credentialed faculty. The correlations between processes and results in this system are typically so low, however, that such an institution should have some way to check directly to see if its graduates are as proficient as they are presumed to be. The more devoid an institution is of the conventional checks and balances, the more explicit and comprehensive an evaluation system it should develop and maintain through which it certifies students for degrees. As the traditional institution must use enough direct assessment to check its results, the nontraditional institution must have enough of an ongoing system of checks and balances to assure the faithful and effective operation of its evaluation and certification system.

Wherever an institution falls along this continuum, the accrediting process has the following responsibilities in determining degree validity:

1. Comparing the achievements the institution requires for its respective degrees against the generally accepted meaning of those degrees.
2. Determining if an institution has a system appropriate to its purpose to assure that these achievements are reached before degrees are awarded.

3. Determining if there is evidence that the institution has used and will use the system faithfully and fairly.

Assurance of Institutional Integrity

If a diverse and independent academic estate is to be preserved, voluntary accreditation must assure institutional integrity. The basic choice is rather simple: Either we have a collection of free-standing, relatively autonomous, self-governing institutions, or we have a unified, government controlled system of postsecondary education. The maintenance of the former depends in some measure on voluntary accreditation's inclination and ability to assure institutional integrity. Institutions must govern themselves responsibly through the loose confederation of institutional accrediting associations, or they will be managed by outsiders.

How does accreditation assure institutional integrity? Basically, by assuring that an institution meets the seven criteria outlined earlier for an creditable institution. Particular care should be shown for the seventh critical characteristic:

The institution manifests its integrity by assessable goals and objectives, full disclosure of its codes of practice, sound fiscal practices, ethical advertising and student recruitment, consistent application of its codes, and an ongoing, systematic means of institutional self-evaluation against the criteria of its stated goals and objectives.

Several matters should be noted about the popular issue of "consumer protection" in relation to institutional integrity. First, if the spirit as well as the letter of the seven criteria is observed, there will be no

problem in "consumer" or student protection. Any accreditable institution will do the following:

1. Fully disclose all its rules and codes affecting students.
2. Provide adequate information about its programs and their educational and career possibilities with which potential students can make decisions.
3. Provide a definite means by which students can state and appeal grievances.
4. Follow sound fiscal practices.

Actually, consumer protection as it is usually defined is not appropriately applied to postsecondary education and, hence, is not a responsibility of accreditation. Consumer protection implies that a consumer is purchasing a completed service or a finished product from a vendor. Education cannot be so purchased. Rather, the student is the primary agent in completing or producing his own education. Common sense and an overwhelming amount of research make it clear that the most significant determinants of educational outcomes are student abilities, past experiences, motivation, and aspirations. Therefore, institutions cannot be held responsible for all the failures of students to achieve, as an automobile manufacturer can be for a faulty brake system.

There is another, essentially legalistic reason why institutional accreditation cannot bear the responsibility of consumer protection. Citizens have a direct means of claiming they have been defrauded in business transactions through the judicial system. In this basic exercise of rights, the citizen has a direct call upon his government for protection and redress when contracts are not honored. Accrediting associations,

on the other hand, are made up of institutions, not individuals. Individuals, therefore, do not have a direct line of appeal to an accrediting association as they do to government by virtue of their citizenship. The accrediting establishment as it exists now does not have the procedures or personnel to hear, weigh, and adjudicate individual complaints and enforce decisions in cases of individual students. The natural line of appeal for a student (i.e., citizen, consumer) to seek redress is through the judicial system and/or an agency of state government having the legal authority to charter or license postsecondary institutions to operate.

All of this is not to say that accreditation is not interested in the welfare of students. Rather, it is to say that accreditation does not have the legal or structural capacity to adjudicate individual cases, which is necessary for consumer protection. Accrediting associations can and should receive notice of such complaints and make the information available to teams sent on visits for reaffirmation. Where an established pattern of such complaints exists, the institution should be asked to explain itself in the accrediting process.

The accrediting community's concern for institutional integrity is mainly expressed in assuring the maintenance of high standards of institutional behavior as discussed in the seven criteria of creditable institutions. In essence, institutional integrity means an institution is as good as its word. Its words are matched by its deeds. In addition to the seven criteria already outlined, institutions have the following particular obligations to students:

1. Disclosing fully rules and regulations affecting students.

2. Having and following fair practices in all transactions--fiscal, regulatory, and academic.

Maintenance of the Independence of the Academic Estate

The protection and enhancement of the independence of the academic estate is the fourth and final purpose of accreditation. Accreditation has a key role in protecting institutions from unwarranted intrusion by government or other primary sponsors into the life of the academy. Though the accrediting community does not now appear to be as alert as it should be to intrusion by way of regulations, nevertheless, one of its rallying points is its function of coalescing members of the academic estate into a common defense against intrusions. As discussed earlier, the relative independence of a postsecondary institution from a noneducational parent institution is critical. If accrediting bodies continue to accredit educational activities that are nothing more than direct extensions of governments, businesses, religious groups, and professional associations, they are sawing off the proverbial limb behind themselves.

Accreditation is also expected to encourage honorable conduct by and among accredited institutions. Ethical institutional practice is to accrediting associations what ethical individual practice is to professional associations. For example, if one institution, while maintaining appropriate academic standards, offers an educational program that is just as effective as but costs less than that of another institution, there is no ethical or accreditation question. It would not be ethical behavior, however, for an institution to "market" a program at a lower cost to students by somehow using the "competing" institution's own resources. For example,

the maintenance of a large and well-ordered library is a great expense. An institution without such a library should not attract students by lower fees and expect those students to use another institution's library, either by openly encouraging them to do so or by leaving them to their own devices to find library facilities. This situation puts the institution paying for the resource in the embarrassing position of having to protect its investments by denying access to individuals in its community. Of course, some financial arrangement could be made between the institutions, which would accurately reflect the cost of resources used.

There are many people who would denounce any taint of the guild or "restrictive" practices being associated with voluntary accreditation. The fact remains, however, that there must be some institutional self-interest served by accreditation or there is no reason for institutions to bear its costs in dollars and donated hours of volunteer services. Therefore, the development of and insistence on adherence to a code of fair institutional practices similar to that expected of individuals by professional associations is not inconsistent with the purposes of accreditation. Institutions cannot afford to jeopardize their considerable investments in faculty, support staff, facilities, and instructional resources by having other organizations award the same credentials at a fraction of the cost by using, without paying for, the resources of conventional institutions. Accrediting bodies thus face a serious dilemma in dealing with certain forms of nontraditional postsecondary education. They must act responsibly in establishing codes of fair practice without, in the process, using such codes to protect the preserve of established

institutions by disenfranchising different and perhaps more effective and efficient institutions.

Finally, the best safeguard against outside intrusion into the affairs of the academy is for accrediting agencies to take the strongest possible position on institutional integrity. The more fair institutions are dealing with students, the less reason there will be for intrusions on the ground of consumer protection. The more institutions are required through accreditation to compete on fair and ethical terms, the less state governments and others may move to prevent new and different institutions from developing. The more sensitive the accrediting community is about lay representation on governing boards and the more insistent it is on adequate independence of educational institutions from any non-educational sponsoring organizations, the more it nourishes the roots of its own existence.

Nontraditional Concerns

The purpose of the COPA study is fundamentally to deal with the accreditation of nontraditional postsecondary education, and it was soon recognized that not all forms of nontraditional higher education elicit serious concern from the accrediting community. Therefore accrediting executives were asked to indicate which types of nontraditionality concern them the most.

Before discussing the specific concerns which were expressed, some relevant general observations should be made. One observation of this researcher is that accreditation is "caught in the middle." It is being pressured by institutions to monitor and resist governmental intrusion, leaving the institutions relatively free to follow their own paths; on the

other hand, government is pressuring accrediting associations to police their member institutions for compliance with governmental policies. At the same time, states appear to be functioning more and more as accrediting agencies through their chartering and licensing activities. In some cases, it is difficult to distinguish between reviews for chartering and licensure and those for accreditation. While the emphases are similar, however, this writer is convinced from the documents used in the research for this project that accreditation reports are superior in substance to those produced in state reviews. Nevertheless, there seems to be a lack of operational distinctiveness between these reviews.

Another general observation is a concern about the "concerns." It seems to this researcher that some of the concerns--more from the academic community than from accreditation executives--contain the hidden agenda of turf protection. For example, the point was made that an accrediting agency has no business in determining whether or not a program should be offered. Its only concern should be to determine that there is an adequate clientele to justify the institution's commitment of resources. Certainly it is a proper concern of an accrediting association that member institutions not take unwise risks and so jeopardize their total program. But whether or not one institution infringes upon another's territory or market is not a proper concern of accrediting bodies. (Several relevant observations were made earlier about the need for ethical interinstitutional practices.)

Turning to the concerns themselves, there is considerably more anxiety about graduate than undergraduate nontraditional institutions and programs. The most intense concerns are with graduate programs that have even one but

especially two or more of the following characteristics:

1. Individualized degree programs. In this case, the concern is that the institution makes little effort to see that students reach levels of achievement generally expected for a given degree. Rather than being individualized in their processes, such programs are also individualized in terms of results expected.

2. Free-standing graduate programs. There is considerable concern about establishing a graduate program in one or a few kindred disciplines outside the context of a collegium of faculty in other disciplines. Even in a well-developed, comprehensive graduate institution, there are strong and weak programs, but there is the real possibility that weaker programs will be steadily pressured to improve for the sake of the reputation of the whole institution. In a graduate organization comprising only one or a few disciplines, this collegial pressure is absent.

3. External study. By external study is meant that students do almost all work away from the campus. In fact, most institutions having this characteristic do not have campuses, only offices; and these are often temporary. There is no climate in which to structure and encourage scholarly reflection or extended research concentration, and there is a haunting doubt that true graduate work, which involves more research than instruction in the known, can be done well in such a circumstance.

4. Part-time faculty. In a number of cases organizations offer graduate programs with a bare skeleton of administrators and no full-time faculty. In some instances, part-time faculty members are paid on a piece-good basis, making the number of students an instructor attracts critical to his income.

5. Remote instruction. Finally, a number of graduate programs, particularly at the master's level, are offered through conventional classroom instruction but at places far removed from the parent campus and the influence of the principal faculty. This is particularly true of the liberal arts colleges offering graduate programs on military bases.

Though graduate programs with one or more of the above characteristics account for the preponderance of accreditors' concerns about non-traditional postsecondary education, there are some other worries about programs at all levels. These concerns have to do with the following:

1. Lack of theoretical underpinning. Some nontraditional programs give so much to the applied areas of a field that they lack appropriate instruction and reflection on the theoretical foundations.

2. "Packaged" programs. There are individual courses as well as complete degree programs being marketed by developers to accredited institutions, which contract for delivery of the package. The entrepreneur may then deceptively trade on the host institution's accreditation. Also these programs often grant large amounts of credit for prior experiences that may not be of collegiate level.

3. Exaggerated claims. In several cases, claims made about non-traditional programs appear exaggerated. This "hard-sell" approach to student recruitment is of serious concern.

4. "Parasitic" operations. In some instances, programs and institutions are nontraditional more by what they do not do rather than by what they do. That is, they do not have their own libraries, full-time faculty, and general support services and facilities. In effect, they

plan to live off the resources of other institutions. Sometimes this is done without any intention to reimburse the other institutions for the services of their facilities, libraries, and other resources.

5. Traditional degrees for nontraditional attainments and experiences. The expressed concern was about the "patchwork" nature of some nontraditional degree programs. The degrees awarded are not differentiated from traditional degrees; yet they are composed of constantly varying mixtures of life-experience credit and independent study recognized through very nontraditional academic structures. Also degree structures and requirements may bear little resemblance to accepted norms.

The concerns about these nontraditional forms become more accentuated in some situations. Newer institutions generally evoke more concern than established ones trying a limited innovation. Trying several nontraditional thrusts at the same time is believed to be more questionable than departing from normal practice in only one way. Also, the general difficulty of maintaining quality is considered to be greater the farther the instruction is from the parent campus.

One significant result of identifying the types of nontraditionality that most concern accrediting professionals is that it indicates also what they are not worried about. Along this line, they do not appear to be greatly concerned about the following forms of nontraditional post-secondary education:

1. Educational agencies that are, in effect, extensions of non-educational institutions.
2. Competency-based curricula within conventional institutions.

3. External degree programs solely concerned with certifying students for appropriate degrees based on extensive assessment systems and operated by major educational institutions or agencies.

4. Remote instructional efforts making major use of systems design and various media.

5. Undergraduate contract degree programs.

6. Educational brokering organizations.

Conclusions

If one agrees with the critical characteristics of an accreditable institution as proposed in this report and with the purposes of accreditation as delineated by this researcher, then several conclusions about the accreditation of nontraditional education follow. The first is that nontraditional postsecondary education is a more important concern for accreditation than the number of students involved in it would indicate. Its importance lies in the precedents it sets and the stimulus it provides for accreditation to reexamine its basic assumptions.

Nontraditional higher education at its best accomplishes the following:

1. It brings into full play the possibilities of systematically designed instruction.

2. It increases higher education's ability to use the capabilities of media beyond print.

3. It offers the possibility of large capital-intensive, as opposed to labor-intensive, undertakings in the delivery of instruction.

4. It elevates the recognition and certification roles of faculties through a variety of valid and reliable assessment approaches.
5. It helps older students to receive credit for competencies already acquired and to meet degree requirements in expeditious ways.
6. It indirectly questions the assumption that proper academic structures and processes are sufficient to assure good results.

There are certain types of nontraditionality, however, that set precedents which if widely adopted could seriously erode the quality of American postsecondary education. The first potentially damaging precedent is the individualized, contract degree program that has no provision for third-party review. Some of the most promising nontraditional breakthroughs have been degree programs which allow students to contract for a unique set of requirements. When such a program uses explicit degree criteria and is reviewed by master faculty separate from the student's mentor, it has great merit. But when there is no third-party, master faculty review, or when such a review is only nominal, the program becomes highly questionable. Such an approach can easily result in a program covering whatever strikes the fancy of the student and a mentor too close to the student to retain an objective perspective.

The idea of an individualized, contract degree can be particularly troubling if the program exists in a climate that is patently nonrational, meaning a climate that emphasizes personal or emotional growth over intellectual achievement, scholarship, or dispassionate inquiry. The non-traditional climate tends to blur the distinctions between psychotherapy and education. Degrees have historically represented and continue to

represent for most people achievements that are susceptible to rational and empirical assessment. The very act of seeking a credential implies that one is willing to have his or her accomplishment judged by others. Fundamentally, then, degrees are awards for rational, scholarly, creative, or scientific achievement, not directly for recognition of personal development, which it can be hoped is a significant by-product.

There are institutions that seek and that have received some accreditation status which have nontraditional programs emphasizing personal development. These institutions are not bound by the broadest and most basic criteria usually associated with the degrees they offer. If accreditation legitimates these programs, the last vestige of some common meaning of degrees will vanish.

A second major precedent that could erode educational quality is for agencies that are merely extensions of noneducational institutions to become accredited to award academic degrees. This issue has already been discussed at length in this report. A few such agencies have already become candidates for accreditation, and some have been fully accredited. This precedent, if unchallenged, means any governmental unit, military branch, business, professional association, trade union, or religious organization could validate its technical training by creating degree-awarding organizations. The direct extension of noneducational institutions into educational activities would be a betrayal of the academic estate's long struggle for independence from the politics, religion, or economics of the moment. Such extensions usually have no prevailing lay representation on their governing boards and essentially no significant degree of independence from their sponsoring organization.

Finally, the fact must be faced that some nontraditional institutions and programs appear to be forthrightly ad hoc and "disposable." They are designed to capitalize on a given market and vanish when it's gone. Programs are structured to cause their target clientele the least possible inconvenience in securing a particular credential. Once a market is saturated, the people behind such programs are out of that market and searching for a new one. The traditional values of institutional permanence and stability are fundamentally contrary to the basic purposes as well as styles of operation of the market-wise education salesman. It is questionable whether the established, somewhat stable institutions will long tolerate these intentionally temporary organizations as members of the same accrediting association.

This researcher concludes, therefore, that accreditation may have been too accommodating in accrediting some forms of nontraditional post-secondary education. The three most questionable forms seem to be as follows:

1. Highly individualized, graduate, contract degree programs dominated by a personal development emphasis.
2. Educational organizations that are extensions of larger, non-educational institutions.
3. Programs obviously designed for "quick in and quick out" marketing with no discernible interest in or potential for permanence.

Finally, for the reasons given earlier, the researcher concludes that the 1980s will bring a greater emphasis in accreditation on quality assurance than on institutional improvement.

Report No. 6

A REVIEW OF NONTRADITIONAL GRADUATE DEGREES

By Paul L. Dressel

PREFACE--A PERSONAL NOTE

When I was first asked by Dr. Grover Andrews to join with him and his associates in the COPA study of the accreditation problems posed by non-traditional degrees, I accepted with enthusiasm. My particular focus was to be on graduate programs. For at least thirty years I have felt that there should be a route to a graduate degree apart from the credit-accumulation and time-serving method now traditional on most university campuses. I have known intimately individuals who have attained a very high level of educational achievement on the basis of their own reading, thinking, and investigation of various problems. Indeed, I am sufficiently egotistical to believe that my own work, research, and writing might have justified a doctoral degree in psychology or education, although my doctorate was, in fact, in mathematics.

Formal recognition of such accomplishment by granting a degree has not generally been possible because conservative faculty members entrenched in their departmental specialities are seldom willing to entertain the possibility that an individual might acquire the equivalent of a degree without attending classes, listening to lectures, and performing the usual chores. I have learned that even when individuals have admittedly acquired the equivalent in courses and credits, through educational programs in business and industry, recognition by a degree may be denied because of "improper motivation" (the desire to get ahead in the job) or because the tests were selected to correspond to practices and views in the organization!

From long involvement with such rigidities, I have become a proponent for programs that offer degrees in nontraditional ways. I insist only that the degrees be well defined, that standards are clear and enforced, and that such nontraditional degrees avoid traditional degree designations such as the Ph.D. unless they can be fully justified as equivalents.

My second reason for accepting the assignment was that I had at various times found myself involved with institutions that had unwisely extended themselves into offering master's degrees at varying distances away from the campus. This was done through use of a changing adjunct faculty, with some well-intended and planned direction from the campus, but little actual control. The result was the granting of degrees of dubious quality in no way controlled or even monitored by the on-campus faculty. In both cases with which I am familiar, the on-campus faculty resisted the offerings, doubted their substance, and were bypassed by creation of another unit. When I reviewed the weaknesses and suggested changes, I was informed that the income from the operations had balanced the budget in the past year and any such changes as I suggested would reduce the "profits." In these circumstances, motivation may reasonably be suspect.

My third reason for enthusiasm was that I had dealt directly with several operations involving the granting of nontraditional degrees and had been dismayed to note that otherwise reasonably intelligent and responsible people had no hesitation about redefining the nature of a degree and the requirements for it without regard for the traditions and standards associated with the degree. It seemed possible that some review of these matters on a national basis by the regional accrediting associations and the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation held the possibility that these matters could be

dealt with in a reasonable and objective way. New organizations granting non-traditional degrees too frequently take the view that they are being crucified whenever questions are raised about their programs. I was also aware, as one who has been extensively involved in accreditation activities with traditional and non-traditional programs, that many of those persons representing traditional institutions carefully avoid any critical examination of nontraditional institutions and ebulliently recommend approval of such programs with only mild suggestions that some matters might be studied further. Thus, I already had serious doubts about the capability of regional associations to deal fairly with all of the constituencies that they must serve. Indeed, during the period of this project I have observed some accrediting of graduate programs that, in my judgment, are well beyond the pale of respectability and should have been asked either to cease and desist under penalty of loss of accreditation or have been required to redefine and restructure the programs to attain at least minimally acceptable standards.

One of the problems, as I shall point out in the body of this report, is that some of the new programs have taken on a very different character from the degree programs typically offered in our traditional universities. The latter are heavily oriented to intellectual development and the acquiring of knowledge and competency in one or several related disciplines. A number of the nontraditional degree programs are heavily oriented toward a personal development and an approach reminding me of a demand made by students in a new experimental college that extensive credit be awarded for successful psychiatric treatment. In brief, it appears to me that some of the non-traditional degree programs largely ignore organized knowledge and focus on effective concerns. The responses of many of the individuals whom I contacted

asking about their satisfaction with their degrees indicated that they were earned more as an ego build-up than because of any concern about job improvement or increased salary. I doubt that graduate degrees offered for personal development, therapy, or ego massage can or should be compared with traditional graduate degrees. Moreover, differing in purpose and kind, they should differ in degree. Yet two institutions whose materials I reviewed grant a Ph.D. and adamantly assert that if it is not strictly comparable to the traditional Ph.D., it is just as rigorous and deserves the same recognition. These variations in degree conception greatly complicate, or perhaps even destroy, the possibility of sound research or evaluation acceptable to all sides.

A number of individuals have registered their dissatisfaction that my "research" on nontraditional degrees did not include some kind of controlled comparison with standard degree programs and a number of panels of judges to review and compare research dissertations or other projects presented for a degree. I am familiar, through evaluation in general education programs and through looking at the Doctor of Arts programs and other new programs, with the demand of the conservative that new programs always be judged by their equivalence or superiority to the old. The problem is, as I've always tried to point out, that new programs generally have somewhat different concerns and are aimed at somewhat different clienteles than traditional programs. There is no real point in comparing a Doctor of Arts degree, designed to prepare an undergraduate college teacher, with a Doctor of Philosophy, designed to prepare for graduate instruction and research. Likewise, I've had other people repeat to me the often emphasized point that nontraditional degrees are indeed different and that different approaches to their review and

accreditation are not only justified but absolutely necessary, even if the same degree designation is used. It appears that it is just as difficult to get some accreditation officials to take a rigorous view of nontraditional degrees as it is to get those operating the nontraditional degrees to take a really critical look at what they are doing. Nevertheless, I have oriented my treatment of nontraditional degree programs in the direction of suggesting what needs to be done in the process of reviewing and accrediting such programs. I have become convinced that nontraditional degrees either must be defined as entirely different from traditional degrees and therefore handled separately or, if they insist on using the same degree patterns, must be accredited by the same criteria and standards.

I do not see these contrasting positions as easily resolvable. I doubt that all regional accrediting associations are presently willing to take and enforce a rigorous stance. Hence, in many ways, I regret the time spent on this project as well as the irritations I have engendered in carrying out this research.

Nevertheless, I hope that, in some small way, this report will provide assistance both to nontraditional, degree-oriented programs (for I very much wish to see sound programs prosper) and to the accrediting groups (because I very much wish to see them state and enforce some reasonable standards). I don't think the problem will ever completely go away. I would predict at this point that a number of the free-standing external degree programs will disappear as their key officials or founders pass on or out. I suggest also that as the number of people seeking such degrees decreases (and I think that must be the case in time), some of the enterprises will find that it is no longer profitable to continue their operations. And, as

some of the degrees become recognized generally as inconsequential, the dissatisfaction of the degree recipients may become sufficiently well known to deter any new prospects. But I also expect that those enterprises which are most successful will ultimately, in their turn, become somewhat traditional and take on many of the trappings of existing institutions. This development may be aided and abetted by the fact that, increasingly, in the competition for students, traditional institutions themselves will tend to expand to any area which offers a counting of credit hours and the possibility of increased dollars.

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A REVIEW OF NONTRADITIONAL GRADUATE DEGREES
WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE PROBLEMS OF ACCREDITATION

Introduction

As indicated in the prefatory remarks, the chore undertaken in this report was that of looking in depth at a number of nontraditional graduate programs and extracting from this review the implications for accreditation. The task of identifying the total group of institutions or the sample for intensive study had already been done by the Director of the COPA Project, Dr. Grover J. Andrews of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, with the assistance of the Project Advisory Committee. The sample on which these remarks are primarily based is exhibited in Appendix A. In one sense, this prior identification and selection required a definition of "nontraditional," but a quick review of the institutions involved indicated that a more explicit definition, specifically with regard to graduate programs, was needed. Generally, as others have noted, nontraditional programs are not dependent upon

- traditional credit and class-hour specifications,
- campus residency requirements,
- existence of a full-time faculty,
- ready availability of a library, counseling, and other learning resources,
- rigidly defined requirements.

Indeed, they are more likely to be characterized by

- flexibility and individualization in programs,
- convenience to students in location and scheduling of courses,
- use of adjunct, temporary faculty members,
- special attention and relevance to mature individuals-- particularly adults employed full time.

A review of the selected sample of nontraditional, graduate, degree-awarding institutions indicated that they could be divided into the following subgroups:

1. Institutions offering at various off-campus sites degrees essentially identical to those offered on campus.
2. Institutions offering at various off-campus sites degree programs especially developed for an off-campus employed clientele.
3. Business, industrial, or research enterprises offering a degree program (through an in-house institute, center, or other unit) primarily for persons employed by the enterprise.
4. Free-standing institutes, colleges, or universities lacking a campus, full-time faculty (at least in traditional terms), and other traditional university attributes.

These four patterns pose somewhat different problems for study. The first type, being a traditional institution, offers an on-campus traditional program at a distance (perhaps in a slightly modified form), but controls the character and quality of the program by developing curricula and evaluation materials, by selecting teachers, and by monitoring the selection and performance of both teachers and students.

The second pattern poses more difficult problems, especially when the extended program becomes very large relative to the home campus or involves programs in which the home faculty lacks either extensive experience or

excellence. In this circumstance, the materials and policies cannot be effectively monitored by the campus faculty. Program quality and character depend heavily on administrators and a few associates and on the selection and coordination of adjunct faculty. The latter task is never ending and time consuming. It is also expensive if done well.

The third pattern can involve the disadvantages or advantages of any of the others, but introduces an additional element: the extent to which the program may be so dominated by corporation interests that academic freedom is destroyed, faculty role in formulating and enforcing policy may be abridged, and program continuance and quality may depend more on corporation needs than on sound educational principles.

Finally, the fourth pattern presents the most difficult problem to evaluate because there is little to observe except when some degree candidates meet as a group for brief periods. There are no resources, no processes, and no permanent faculty to be seen or heard.

How can such a diversity of nontraditional programs be reviewed and evaluated in relation to traditional ones? Processes, materials, instructional methods, and the like tell little about quality and to push evaluation by comparison in that direction is to hold nontraditional programs to irrelevant "norms" or "standards." Evaluation by appraisal of outcomes likewise runs into immediate difficulty. Many master's programs offered in traditional institutions depend solely on credit accumulation in specified but often highly flexible course patterns. There are no theses or integrative papers that are indicative of the cumulative impact of the program. Traditional doctoral programs also vary. Traditionally, the Ph.D. requires a research dissertation that is presumed to be a contribution of new knowledge, but some Ph.D.

programs, especially in clinical psychology and in education, have been problem and practitioner oriented. The Doctor of Education, Doctor of Business Administration, Doctor of Public Administration, and Doctor of Arts degrees have been regarded as practitioner rather than research degrees, and the nature and extent of any final report have varied greatly among departments and colleges. Some departments require a product that approximates the Ph.D. research dissertation, while others have accepted a series of papers, case studies, or an internship report. Neither the character nor the quality of the final product for any of the doctorates has been authoritatively prescribed and enforced. Thus, evaluation of program or degree quality by appraisal of the quality of the culminating task is difficult. Nevertheless, the appraisal of outcome quality is a more promising and more appropriate procedure for nontraditional programs than a focus on program requirements and processes. An application of the same emphasis to traditional programs is then necessary and also highly desirable.

The preceding comments point up some of the difficulties in evaluating nontraditional graduate programs. Almost any individual or group developing a nontraditional program can point to an aberrant interpretation of a degree in some accredited institution that provides a precedent. This approach to justification permits the innovator to assume a stance either of persecution or of arrogance, depending on whether a bias toward traditional institutions or an ignorance of the manifold program interpretations and variations in quality within accredited institutions is assumed on the part of a critic or accreditation agent. This creates a series of dilemmas, both for the innovator and the accreditor.

The first dilemma is that the need for innovation in higher education is widely accepted. The disagreements are with the nature and the extent of the innovations. The innovator, whether competent or incompetent, whether motivated by service or pecuniary gain, and whether concerned with quality or with quantity, can always cast the conservative educational institutions and their agencies as villains concerned only with maintaining a monopoly. This contention has had some merit at times and is, therefore, not easily shaken off.

The second dilemma is that the innovator, even when clearly addressing a new and different educational need, often insists on holding to traditional designations that are already widely recognized. Thus, a number of non-traditional programs insist on awarding the prestigious Ph.D. degree for programs which completely pervert the traditional and standard view of the Ph.D. as a research degree. In these circumstances, the critic has the difficult task of distinguishing between a nontraditional degree program that is meritorious but uses an inappropriate degree designation and a nontraditional program that lacks merit regardless of degree designation. In contrast, one may note that institutions desiring to promote a degree for college teachers selected a new degree and accepted the responsibility of defining and attaining acceptance for it.

A third dilemma results from the fact that some of the nontraditional graduate programs are administered by persons whose interests, commitments, and strengths lie more in the realm of humanistic concerns and personal development than in research, scholarship, or practitioner expertise. In this circumstance, whatever standards or structures are implied by printed materials

may be completely ignored by a sympathetic mentor when a highly verbal candidate with an attractive personality can develop and "sell" a program uniquely adapted to his needs, ambitions, and prior experiences. What might be an occasional and justifiable aberrant program in a traditional institution can thus easily become the dubious norm in a nontraditional one. The critic who attempts to point this out is on treacherous ground because he is expressing doubt of the intentions, integrity, and intelligence of the program administrative staff.

After deliberating on these problems and dilemmas, I concluded that my approach to reviewing nontraditional programs should be broadly based and concerned more with the identification of issues, dilemmas, and problems that innovators and accreditors face when the appropriateness and quality of a nontraditional degree offering must be resolved in reaching a decision about accreditation. The following outline indicates the procedures used.

1. Review and analysis of catalogs, brochures, self-studies, and other printed or mimeographed statements to determine:
 - 1.1 program requirements, including admissions, classes, and workshops, and tasks required of students
 - 1.2 course syllabi or outlines
 - 1.3 faculty qualifications and selection processes
 - 1.4 nature and extent of quantitative program review by institution and faculty responsible for program
2. Review of student records and student products to determine:
 - 2.1 nature of records and reports on students during program
 - 2.2 extent and nature of review of student work by faculty
 - 2.3 character and quality of student work (papers, theses, dissertations)

3. Review of accreditation reports, evaluative studies, etc. to determine:
 - 3.1 nature of comments made by those who have previously reviewed the program
 - 3.2 Thoroughness of accreditation reviews and appropriateness of recommendations
4. Questionnaire survey of degree recipients to determine:
 - 4.1 personal satisfaction of individuals with the program
 - 4.2 extent to which completion of the degree was recognized by associates, employers, salary increase, promotions, etc.
5. Criteria for judgments:
 - 5.1 relation between time and student efforts and credit
 - 5.2 quality of faculty
 - 5.3 quality control of program by faculty or outside evaluators
 - 5.4 amount and quality of work done by students as appraised by a person with some thirty years of experience in directing graduate study, conducting reviews and evaluation of graduate programs, and working as a North Central evaluator and consultant.

Two Examples

The following case studies are reports and comments on actual but unidentified institutions offering nontraditional graduate programs. The intent of each case study is to document the importance of certain issues. Anonymity has been maintained by making some changes in what would otherwise have been exact quotations from institutional materials.

Institution A

This institution operates through several branches which, judging from the literature, are essentially independent in their procedures and criteria.

The Ph.D. and the M.A. are offered, but I shall comment only on the Ph.D.

The following extracts are drawn from printed materials of the institution.

1. The Ph.D. has an honored tradition as the highest earned academic degree in the United States. In every accredited university, candidates are expected to acquire a broad background of scholarship in their field and then to do intensive intellectual work on some frontier of knowledge.
2. "Institution A" is no less concerned than are other schools with maintaining standards of excellence. Candidates are expected to master the relevant literature in their field, to know the current controversies and alternative positions, to write cogent and readable reports, and to think critically on the issues. Candidates are expected to make a noteworthy and creative contribution to their field.
3. All components of "Institution A" value the honored tradition of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy as the highest earned academic degree. Each program demands excellence in scholarship and competence in contemplated spheres of professional activity.
4. General Objectives:

To offer the opportunity for highly qualified and highly motivated students with master's degrees to earn a doctorate in a non-traditional program that differs from the traditional methods as follows:

- a. Students are permitted to design programs suited to their special needs, strengths, and vocational opportunities;
 - b. Students are permitted to utilize a far broader range of educational resources than are available on any one university campus;
 - c. Students are appraised on the basis of individual progress rather than by time served or credit points earned;
 - d. Students are privileged to make a contribution of excellence in a larger variety of forms of research, scholarship, demonstration projects, and creative experiences than traditional programs permit.
5. In summary, this doctoral program is intended for persons who are genuinely eager for advanced knowledge that can be used for

practical and socially beneficial purposes, who enjoy study and creative manipulation of ideas and concepts, who wish to do action research into self and/or society that can help to improve the quality of living for underprivileged segments of the national population.

6. Committee Formation. Within the first four months after the initial Colloquium the student must form a Program Committee composed of the Core Professor, two Adjunct Professors (recognized experts in the student's major area of study, chosen from the faculty of any college or university or from other professions or occupations); and two student peers. The student is responsible for selecting his Adjunct Professors, for making satisfactory arrangements for the required services expected, and for providing biographical information about his selectees.
7. Leadership in Education (for students interested in educational innovation). There is a six-week total residential requirement, starting with an intensive ten-day colloquium followed by several weekend mini-colloquia.
8. Internship. It is expected that every doctoral candidate will hold at least one internship during his tenure. An internship, as defined in respect to this program, is an intensive investigation involving personal involvement in learning and research activities intended to examine, analyze, and evolve possible solutions to or ameliorations of significant problems that prevent the minority person from sharing equally in the fruits of American democracy as are found in such areas as housing, health services, education, economics, politics, urban planning, the arts, and the sciences....
9. Fulfillment of Residency. Every candidate for the degree must fulfill the requirement of six weeks of residency during his/her enrollment in the program. Residency means time spent in study or other types of educational activities within the physical environment of the Center or wherever Colloquia may be conducted away from the Center. In addition to four quarterly colloquia each year yielding a total of two weeks of residency, a two-week colloquium is usually sponsored each summer yielding two weeks of residency.
10. Project of Excellence. The project is similar to a dissertation required in traditional programs in that it is the final report on the major activities and conclusions resulting from intellectual study and internship during the duration of the program. It may be recorded in a written document, on film, on tapes, on charts, or a combination of all four methods. It must represent a significant contribution to the area of study one has pledged to

explore. Excellence in creative action is demonstrated by competent diagnosis of a social situation requiring action; by ingenious effectiveness in actually changing the situation; and by critical thinking in evaluating what was done so that others can learn from the writer's experience, both his successes and failures. It is seldom, if ever, satisfactory simply to recommend new social structures or actions or intervention. These must be tried out in actual operation as pilot projects.

11. The Project may resemble a thesis or dissertation of the kind usually produced in Ph.D. programs at other universities, but the "Institution A" concept is broad enough to include other types of product, e.g., a publishable book, a unified series of essays or articles, a project of social change or innovation, outstanding creations in poetry, media presentation, painting, or musical composition. The Project must represent a significant contribution to our culture.
12. Decision on the acceptability of the Project rests with the student's committee. The Core Professor and one Adjunct Professor read or review the report as it nears completion, but their role is consultative rather than judgmental. The committee, with the Core Professor as a member, is the final academic reviewer.
13. Terminar. The final committee session prior to the awarding of the degree is called terminar. After completion of his/her approved program and the Project, a student may apply for the degree which will be authorized after the student's work in full has been appraised and approved by her/his Program Committee. A minimum of one year is required for terminar (the average is two years).
14. ...The Coordinating Professor shares the responsibilities of serving the enrollee as advisor, monitor, facilitator, and evaluator with a Committee of two Adjunct Professors (part-time) and two students chosen by the enrollee until the enrollee's program has been successfully completed or terminated. Once the plan of study has been approved by the Committee of five, four of whom are chosen by the student, the enrollee is expected to pursue the plan with minimum interference from his Committee, except when he/she requests advice and or aid from whatever Committee member or members can best supply the advice or help that is needed. The enrollee is expected to be conscious of and willing to use the most appropriate learning resources available, including conferences with experts in the field, library books and facilities, supplementary course work at other institutions, and experiments to test theories and hypotheses.
15. ...Decision on readiness for the Ph.D. is made jointly by the student and the student's committee....
 - a. Application to "Institution A" should be made only by candidates who clearly cannot obtain the kind of advanced training they require

within more conventional doctoral programs....Enrollment--requires full commitment, new effort, new direction, and focused discipline--many aspects of one's life....

- b. Learning Aids. Library resources have been, and still continue to be, a major medium for graduate study. There are, however, many other methods. Programmed instruction and language laboratories assist students in mastering varied forms of subject matter. Tape-recorded material, much of it now available in cassettes, is better than printed material for many kinds of learning. Some science courses have been developed as a series of individually performed experiments, following tape-recorded directions. Films are becoming increasingly available. Many of these can be borrowed from libraries and learning centers. Television--cable, educational, and commercial--provides much that is of educational value....

The initially cited paragraph from the bulletin of "Institution A" indicates on the part of those operating the institution a recognition of the essential nature of the Ph.D. The purpose of inserting the paragraph is unclear because a great portion of the subsequent quotations which are presented make it clear that this institution is departing from the traditional definition of the Ph.D. to create its own definition. The second paragraph, while indicating a concern about maintaining the standards of the Ph.D., seems to be included only to ward off criticism. The third paragraph cited simply repeats this concern on a later page, despite the fact that intervening and succeeding materials demonstrate that this institution uses the Ph.D. for its own purposes and decides upon its own standards of excellence. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the institution operates through a number of branches apparently with minimum coordination and with no rigorous means of assuring preservation of standards across the various components.

The fourth citation dealing with the general objectives (which actually preceded the previous three statements in the published materials) indicates that students are permitted to design their own programs and that they are "privileged" to make a contribution of excellence in a larger variety of forms than traditional programs permit. The combination of extending to students the prerogative of designing their own programs and of extending the concept of a doctoral dissertation to include most anything as long as it is judged "excellent" can hardly be regarded as preserving the traditions of the Ph.D. The fifth citation emphasizes practical and socially beneficial purposes, action research, and the improvement of the quality of living for underprivileged segments of the national population. While this citation apparently refers to one particular branch of the Ph.D. program of "Institution A," the general nature of the statement is consistent with that of similar statements for other programs. It should be noted that this statement converts the Ph.D. into a practically oriented program. While some precedent can be found for this use of the Ph.D. in some colleges of education, the traditional Ph.D. emphasis is neither action oriented nor social problem oriented. There are other degrees for these purposes that would be more appropriate and that one would have expected the institution to use if it were truly concerned about maintaining the traditional standards of the Ph.D.

Citation six deals directly with the matter of program formulation and excellence. The core professor, one must assume by the nature of the discussion, is to be a full-time employee of the institution or, at minimum, have a major commitment of time to it. The adjunct professors, as one reads

the complete discussion of this role, may be full-time in other institutions or they may not even be involved in higher education. And finally there are two student peers on the committee. These persons may be previous degree recipients from the institution (so it says elsewhere) or may be currently enrolled students, possibly at a less advanced stage of progress than the person for whom the committee is formed. A further alarming note here is that the student is responsible for selection of these people and does so in circumstances which make it dubious as to whether four out of the five members of the program committee would ever take a very rigorous position on the program or the culminating project. The appropriateness of students serving on a program committee for other students when that committee is the final decision-making unit about program and excellence of the product must be suspect. It is simply an extension of the general pattern of the condition suggested here that individuals coming into the program are to have almost complete autonomy in deciding what they want to do and when they have met the requirements for the awarding of a degree. This in itself is sufficient to make the program suspect.

Item seven also specifically refers to one of the five programs operated by this institution, but similar statements exist for others. For one accustomed to think in terms of a minimal residence requirement of one year for a doctoral program, the use of the phrase "residential requirement" in connection with a six-week total, which turns out to be a combination of a ten-day colloquium and weekend-mini-colloquia, can only lead to questioning whether the term "residential" is not used, like some of the earlier statements about the traditions of the Ph.D., to lay a claim for recognition of Ph.D. traditional

requirements in some small way. Clearly what is stated here is not a residential requirement in the usual sense, and one might well have had more respect for those who wrote up these programs if they had avoided use of the term.

The eighth citation deals with the matter of an internship. It again relates to one particular program and carries the earlier comments about a practical orientation to personal activities in the development of solutions or means of ameliorating significant problems. The range of these problems is startling: housing, health services, education, economics, politics, urban planning, the arts, and the sciences. Up to this point one might have assumed that "Institution A" was largely concerned with people who were studying in the fields of education or the policy aspect of the social sciences. By implication at least, there seems to be the possibility here that individuals interested in the arts, medicine, and physical or biological sciences might also be accepted in the program. It would appear that the resources of "Institution A" do not extend to providing rigorous experiences in some of these fields, and one would have more confidence in the public statements of the institution if this were made clear.

Citation nine discusses the residency at greater length and particularly emphasizes the arithmetic of how quarterly colloquia and summer colloquia add up to meet these requirements. Again one gets the impression that "Institution A" will go to any lengths in its statements to seem to perpetuate certain traditional doctoral requirements.

Item ten, discussing the equivalent of the dissertation requirement, makes clear how such a project can differ from the traditional Ph.D.

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dissertation. The last sentence of this quotation particularly brings back the concern about practicality and action research. However, my personal experience in dealing with individuals and with community problems raises doubts in my mind that an individual can mount an operation of the size required to make a real impact on a social problem even in a small community. One may readily suspect, in view of the history of billion-dollar social programs in this country, that this emphasis on action research and on change is only a verbal facade.

Item eleven extends the range of projects into poetry, media presentation, painting, or musical composition. A few years ago a candidate at one branch of this institution indicated that his project would be the creation and performance of an interpretative dance with significant educational and social meanings. Obviously, "Institution A" has moved the Ph.D. into the creative realm, certainly in inappropriate use, for other degrees have been developed to cover these creative fields.

Item twelve specifies that the acceptability of the project rests with the student's committee. One needs to recall that the core professor is the only one of the committee with a continuing connection with the institution. The committee contains two adjunct professors (who need not be educators) and two students. In short, four members of the committee have no vested interest in the maintenance of excellence, and their reputations are unlikely to be injured in any way no matter how low the quality of the product accepted. Furthermore, there is no assurance under these circumstances that any of the five committee members have the experience, scholarship, or professional ethics to insure some rigor in the review of the project.

Item thirteen speaks to the equivalent in this program of the final oral examination about a dissertation. The statement is somewhat ambiguous, but I read it as indicating that the program committee carries on an oral discussion with the candidate after the approval has been given for the work and the final project. If the project has already been approved by the committee, it is uncertain what role the terminar plays.

In reviewing programs like this, the critic is likely to be troubled by the language used. In this particular program, one finds a perplexing combination of statements: On the one hand are statements about maintaining excellence of the Ph.D. and the use of terms like "residence requirements" to imply the maintenance of certain traditional requirements. On the other hand, words and phrases like "terminar" and "project demonstrating excellence" not only signal dubious departure from traditional requirements, but some disdain for them and a degree of preciosity in creating something new and definitive which, by the rejection of the use of traditional terminology, is also implied to be better. This combination of motivations often leads to some unusual and ambiguous or contradictory statements. For example, the last sentence of the item about the terminars says that "a minimum of one year is required for terminar." The first sentence has defined the terminar as the final committee session, but a year-long session suggests a rigor of investigation that is unlikely to be found in any program. The operators of "Institution A" have been tripped up by their own confusing terminology.

Items fourteen and fifteen are interesting in that they indicate the extent of responsibility--or essentially lack of responsibility--that "Institution A" takes for providing materials and planning learning experiences

for the students in the program. Note that "the enrollee is expected to pursue the plan with minimum interference from his Committee" and also that "the enrollee is expected to be conscious of and willing to use the most appropriate learning resources available." Item fifteen, after stating that individuals should apply only if they cannot obtain the kind of advanced training required in more conventional programs (and elsewhere appealing to students who are full-time employed), suggests that enrollment requires full commitment and then refers to library resources and other materials, many--perhaps most--of which would actually be found only in traditional institutions with vast collections of learning materials and resources for experimentation. The statement on learning aids is rather obviously a pious commitment to the use of a range of learning materials, but with no indication as to whether these are available or how the student is to learn about them or gain access to them. Several of the statements under the section on learning aids are obviously space fillers without much thought as to their implications. Programmed instruction and language laboratories to assist students in mastering varied forms of subject matter are, to a considerable extent, available for undergraduate courses; there are relatively few of these available in substantive materials that the graduate student would need to use. The same is true with tape-recorded materials, although speeches of scholars and researchers and recorded panel discussions do provide useful ways to get up-to-date information. The sentence, "Some science courses have been developed as a series of individually performed experiments following tape-recorded directions," hardly seems to be appropriate to this statement, either in terms of the level of material or in terms of the likelihood of anyone seeking

advanced study following a program sponsored by this institution. The quotation ends with an indication that some of these materials are available from libraries and learning centers. One notes here that "learning center" is apparently approved as a phrase because it avoids referring to traditional colleges and universities.

In reviewing all of these materials, I am aware that those involved in "Institution A" will regard most of these comments as completely biased and prejudiced. I find it curious, having talked with some to the people in this program and in a number of others, that they, on one hand, seem to feel that their self-appraised commitment to standards should protect them from criticism and, on the other hand, that their own prejudgments make it impossible to converse objectively about these issues. The stance--particularly of individuals in this institution as I have experienced it--is: "We are doing an excellent job and either you accept it or you are unreasonably biased." This attitude makes evaluation very difficult for those who are generally favorable to the idea of nontraditional educational opportunities, but are also concerned with the maintenance of some degree of rigor in the process.

Institution B

"Institution B" is a residential university that sponsors an external degree program. By enrolling in the program, students can complete a bachelor's or a master's degree while continuing their full-time occupation. The program is well organized, attracts a large number of participants from around the world, and maintains an academic credibility often missing from such programs. The factors contributing to the success of this program are varied, but they are carefully linked to form a monitoring grid of high quality.

Initially, the program was designed to serve citizens in ways not traditionally achieved by continuing education. While continuing education offered opportunities in many locations, the new program was conceived to allow any citizen of the institution's home state to pursue a college degree without sacrificing time away from a job or having to travel to a remote location. In addition, because the program would involve the awarding of credit and the granting of degrees, continuing education seemed an inappropriate location. The program was officially established in the early seventies by the faculty senate and board of trustees of the institution. Once in operation, the program soon attracted the attention of business and the military, leading to extensive master's degree centers, particularly in business and education. The program, in responding to this graduate need, has now expanded out of state and includes a number of permanent centers in major communities and military sites. The program retains its original thrust for individuals pursuing the B.A. degree, but the undergraduate enrollment is much smaller than the graduate enrollment.

The program headquarters is on a sponsoring campus under the leadership of a director. The title of director is used to differentiate the position from that of an academic dean. Several staff members are responsible for the administration of the total program and for supporting and monitoring academic quality.

Each external segment of the program is coordinated by a program manager who is responsible for day-to-day operation, including scheduling and advising. These managers serve as liaisons with the students, the sponsoring institutions, and the parent university. Each off-campus location is

coordinated by a resident representative who is supervised by the program manager.

This external program is closely linked to the academic governance structure of the parent university. The faculty senate, which approved the establishment of the program, formed an Academic Council charged with monitoring the quality of the offerings. This council, made up of faculty members, in turn authorized small review boards to monitor the content of individual programs. The council makes academic policy for the program and reports to the senate; the review boards periodically review the academic content, and evaluation teams establish standards by which to assess the various learning experiences. This somewhat complex organization appears to function well and is one of the reasons the program has been well received by the resident faculty.

The selection of faculty is another link which adds validity to this program. Instruction is provided by members of the sponsoring university faculty, by faculty from other institutions, by practicing specialists, and by other recognized professionals. All faculty are approved by the respective departments on the home campus, and a comprehensive application/review process is conducted by the staff of the program and by personnel committees of the respective departments. This direct involvement of departmental faculty in personnel decisions as well as in program review establishes strong and healthy rapport between the external program and the on-campus faculty, dispells fears about the quality of the off-campus program, and draws support from critics of nontraditional approaches.

Members of the on-campus departments have first opportunity in teaching courses in this program, but often the distances involved make it impractical to staff all centers with on-campus faculty, so qualified off-campus personnel are recruited. When this involves faculty from another institution, the faculty member must secure permission from his or her home institution to be a teacher in this program.

All work done by the resident faculty, whether teaching, curriculum evaluation, or personnel review, is done on an overload basis with pay. There are limitations on the amount of overload money a person can earn within a year's time through this program. This limitation is contained in the faculty union contract. Moreover, no one serving on the Academic Council can teach in the terms preceding, following, or during such service.

The program and course offerings are usually initiated at the request of a business or industry, an association, a governmental agency, or other organization. The requesting body then serves as sponsor of that particular program.

After a request has been received, the personnel of the institute ascertain if an institution in the immediate need area is offering the requested program. If not, an inquiry is made to determine if there is any interest in offering the program by the local institution. This policy indicates the good faith of this program not to intrude into the territory of another institution.

After determining that no such similar offering is available and/or no interest exists in offering it, the staff attempts to identify student needs, organize courses, and arrange for class meetings. The class schedules are as flexible as possible, often on one weekend per month, and are determined largely by the availability of facilities and faculty. This flexibility, while being

an asset, has implications for advising and program planning as well as faculty and students.

Each student is assigned an adviser who is responsible for developing the student's program plan. The advisers are located in the areas where the classes are offered, and attempts are made to educate these persons to make them fairly effective advisers. However, a great portion of the individual's program is based upon whatever is available when the individual is able to enroll. Thus, the possibility of any particular sequence or order in courses and any cumulative aspect in an individual student's program is somewhat remote. This particular problem has been addressed by the faculty and staff of the program, but is difficult to resolve.

The impact of scheduling on students and faculty is important. For the most part, classes are held in rented facilities such as public schools, churches, and community buildings. Because the program is designed not to interfere with job schedules and uses rented facilities, classes are usually held on weekends. Operating generally on Saturdays and Sundays, the programs are highly intensive in nature and prove exhausting to both the students and the faculty. Several faculty members who have taught in this program stressed the difficulty that they and the students encountered in maintaining an adequate performance level over this time period.

While no objective measure of student quality is available, faculty members felt that students in the program generally were highly motivated and produced work of good quality. Faculty expressed satisfaction with the work produced and observed that often individuals were doing as good or better work than students on the home campus. Scheduling certainly has some

influence in this area. The total amount of time spent in class would probably be equal for on- and off-campus courses. However, on-campus classes have a more productive rhyme for learning than do the off-campus classes.

Another area of concern is the belief by the on-campus faculty that some adjunct faculty view their participation as just an additional job and that, in some cases, they do not put in the time in preparing for classes or evaluating student performance that an on-campus faculty member would. The home faculty have often reviewed examination questions prepared by adjunct faculty and submitted others; however, there has been no systematic review of grading practices and standards in the off-campus locations.

There is a conscientious attempt in this program to provide students with access to a library and to encourage and facilitate its use. At present, the library services are housed in two areas: one on the main campus, the other in one of the off-campus locations. Students and faculty have access to a twenty-four-hour WATTS line to the main campus library. Specific staff members are available twenty-four hours for this program to assist in identifying and locating reference materials or books. A card catalog is being prepared in booklet form and will be distributed off campus to acquaint students with available materials and services.

This program is self-supporting and tuition is expensive. The high cost has resulted in a decline in the baccalaureate degree market. The graduate degree market has not suffered, because the programs are usually funded by the corporation or agency sponsoring the programs. Although there are some people on the home campus who thought that the programs could be a source of additional

revenue which would help the sponsoring university, particularly in a period in which enrollments might decrease, there is no longer any strong feeling that this is a possibility. As the faculty members have insisted on increasing the quality of the course offerings, upgrading the material supplied to the students, and enhancing library opportunities, the amount of excess funds has significantly decreased. The university is now applying any excess funds to the purchase of equipment and other one-time items. The credit hours generated through this program, including those produced in the home state, are not reported to the state, and the funds accruing from the program are not reported as student fees. The sponsoring institution has come to the conclusion that these programs, if well done, will not be a source of income that can be used to subsidize or offset deficits on the home campus.

All things considered, this particular program is healthy. There is some concern that a high degree of equivalence be maintained between on-campus and external degree programs. There is, however, an honest realization that the same standards cannot always be maintained, even with highly motivated students. Concerns focus on the awkward and inconvenient times at which classes meet; the exhausting nature of classes extending over many hours; the relatively low amount of time students have access to faculty members, even when carefully selected and interested in their work; the lack, even given the progressive efforts made by the home campus, of library materials; and finally, the fact that, in many cases, the courses in the program and the occupation of the individual student do not have a connection.

The direct link to the parent institution, both in curriculum and personnel, is a positive feature of this program. The internal quality

control exercised by the program staff and the faculty provides the courses with academic respectability. The concern over and attempts to provide serious advising, the realistic approach to the program as a source of income, and, significantly, the organizational structure that retains this program as an integral part of the university rather than as a entrepreneurial enterprise combine to undergird this program with credibility.

Summary

These two examples suggest the range of issues and of serious weaknesses in nontraditional degree programs. Many of the problems and weaknesses arise from the lack of experience and understanding of graduate education on the part of those founding or administering the program. Other problems arise out of an unjustified and (in these circumstances) inappropriate faith in the motivations and aspirations which permit individuals to achieve degrees by self-defined experiences and personally acceptable standards. However, the second case study indicates that a reasonably sound program can be maintained if sufficient time and effort are given to planning and to monitoring by qualified faculty.

Some General Comments

Even among the small number of nontraditional graduate programs that I have reviewed in some detail, there is a wide range of characteristics. Many discussions of nontraditional degree programs have characterized them as nonresidential. Reflection suggests that this characterization has various meanings. One obviously is that students are not in residence--that is, they are not fulfilling a residency requirement. There may be occasional

meetings of a group of students, and there may be one or more workshop sessions in the summer or some other time, but generally the students reside at varying distances from the administrative center and from those places at which the meetings or workshops are held. The faculty is also nonresidential in that most faculty members are employed on a part-time basis as adjunct professors to provide certain lectures or teach certain courses. They are present at such time as groups meet, but are relatively inaccessible except by phone or correspondence at other times. To a considerable extent, these nonresidential degrees are also nonclassroom degrees, although the amount of classroom or group sessions varies considerably. In general, however, the amount of formal, face-to-face, scheduled classroom activity is much less than is the case in campus-based programs. In contrast to on-campus programs where a high degree of interaction among graduate students and between graduate students and their professors is possible (though not always present), such interactions are certainly lessened and, in many cases, minimal in nontraditional programs. Nevertheless, some nontraditional programs emphasize the existence of a minimal "residency" requirement (several workshops or colloquiums totaling perhaps six weeks).

A second way to look at nontraditional graduate degrees is to characterize them as free standing or sponsored. There has been some ambiguity in the use of these terms, so I shall undertake to interpret them on the basis of my own analysis. Free-standing graduate programs are offered by organizations, usually called universities or institutes, that do not have the customary characteristics of a traditional degree-granting institution. In fact, they usually lack any identifiable campus other than a few offices to house the

permanent administrative personnel. Sponsored nontraditional graduate degree programs are those provided at various locations and in various ways by educational institutions that do have traditional campuses and organizations offering full-time resident degrees, although not necessarily identical to the nontraditional degrees. Degree programs may also be sponsored by organizations that are not themselves educational institutions. The Ph.D. degree offered by the Rand Research and Development Corporation is an example. Most of the students work for Rand and, in a sense, are "in residence." Most of the faculty members are engaged in full-time work with Rand and are only part-time professors; yet they, too, are on site. Excellent library facilities are available because of the nature of the Rand enterprise. However, a special problem arises because the major aspects of the Rand enterprise are not educational, and the dominance of the educational program by the corporation could have undesirable results. I should add that this does not seem to be a serious concern with the Rand program, which appears to be a very good doctoral program and one which is nontraditional largely because it exists outside the framework of an established university and because the continuance of the degree program is always dependent upon the continuing interest and support of the corporation.

The latter aspect of the Rand program illustrates another characteristic of nontraditional programs. All of them have relatively uncertain futures as compared with programs that exist on a traditional campus. Although universities, either private or public, can be terminated, this occurrence is relatively unlikely, especially for those offering extensive graduate programs. Of course, programs within such institutions can be terminated, but the continuance of

the institution itself at least provides a continuing base on which a degree recipient can document his study and degree. Moreover, the reputation of the university itself provides some assurance of the respectability and transferability of the degree, even if a particular program is discontinued.

Nontraditional degree programs sponsored by such universities also share these characteristics. Although the university may terminate a particular program in certain locations or even discontinue the program, the fact that the degree has been granted by an institution that continues to exist provides some security for degree recipients.

In contrast, the free-standing institution has the possibility of a very short life because its assets are quite limited. It may hold no property; it may have a few full-time administrators and may have no full-time faculty. Lacking in facilities and resources, it probably is entirely dependent upon tuition. The institution's continued existence may depend upon the commitment of one or two highly dedicated individuals who organized the program. A marked drop in enrollment could lead to an immediate cutback in the already limited services provided by such programs and shortly result in its demise. The value of a degree obtained from such an institution will certainly be depreciated by the fact that the institution no longer exists. Such an institution may also undergo an abrupt and complete change in character with a changing of the sponsors or administrators. Indeed, one institution that earlier granted some very questionable degrees has claimed in its request for further review by the regional accrediting agency that a new administration has introduced higher standards. The opposite development (lowering standards) is also possible. When the existence and standards of an educational

institution depend almost entirely on the integrity of one or two people, the difference between a sound operation and a degree mill may depend on their continued involvement.

Most of the nontraditional degree programs of the free-standing type appear to be devoted entirely to the offering of degrees. As has been pointed out, some of them offer formal instruction in varying amounts, but a few--stating that they accept only individuals who have completed sufficient graduate courses to be ready for a dissertation--content themselves only with offering some assistance in attaining some familiarity with research skills and with requirements in the development of a topic and its acceptance. Although such institutions naturally refrain from use of the terminology, many of their students appear to be what traditional institutions characterize as A.B.D.'s--that is, individuals who have finished all requirements but the dissertation. The institution provides the opportunity for completing that requirement and then awards the Ph.D. There are many reasons for A.B.D.'s, including lack of research interest on the part of the individual, financial needs compelling the taking of a full-time job after completing course work, and faculty indifference. Thus the salvaging of A.B.D.'s is not without merit, but the emphasis upon research Ph.D. degrees in an institution that does not itself support research or extensive service and lacks a faculty engaged in such activities raises doubts about the quality of the supervision of research that can be supplied. The very structure of these institutions--lacking a full-time faculty and with very minimal faculty involvement in the planning and carrying out of programs--means, in most cases, that the program is dominated by an administration relatively remote from the students, from the

activities of faculty and students, and, hence, from the educational focus of the institution. Persons long resident on traditional university campuses know that there is a problem even there of the faculty feeling that the administration does not understand its problems, and with the administrative officers themselves having some concern that they find some time to intermingle with students and faculty.

Most of the nontraditional programs that offer courses are rather highly structured from sheer necessity. On a traditional campus, students may have relatively great freedom to pursue their own interests, even in the context of a single course, because occasional interaction between the student and instructor insures that both understand what is being done and that the student can be given some guidance when difficulties develop. When instruction is provided on occasional contact, either face to face or by phone or correspondence, the limits of these contacts almost require that the contracts to be fulfilled by individuals be spelled out in some detail. When courses are offered, certainly their range must be limited and, since formal meetings are generally minimized, they must be relatively highly structured. The presence, in some cases, of rules with regard to required attendance and make up of any absence reflects this structuring. In two of the nontraditional doctoral programs reviewed, students are permitted a much higher degree of individualization than would usually be permitted in a traditional campus program. In these programs, the work reports and dissertations of several students cast doubts on the adequacy of the direction and supervision provided. Individuals seemed to have done pretty much as they wished and received a degree for it.

In the program materials provided, the students themselves are generally characterized as being rather different from the students who enroll in traditional programs on campus. They are spoken of variously as older, self-directed students, mid-career students, and full-time employed students. Most desire an education that has immediate usefulness that can be completed expeditiously. The age, experience, and motivation of these students are often given as reasons for minimizing formal classroom contacts and the time required to complete a degree. It is agreed that the interaction of work and learning rebounds to the benefit of both, educating the student more intensely and more quickly than would be the case in a traditional program. In some programs, experience is apparently accepted as the equivalent of certain segments of formal study, thereby expediting the individual's progress. Yet the very fact that these individuals are generally employed full time and that they often have family responsibilities and various social and organizational commitments raises serious questions as to just how much work can reasonably be expected from them. While many students are highly motivated, their job demands not infrequently must take priority over education. The fact that education is offered in this convenient way, in full recognition of the demands upon these people, apparently causes an expectation on the part of some that the priority of these other matters will be accepted by instructors or mentors. There is evidence from one survey that some students expect that continued payment of fees and completion in some form of specified requirements will result in a degree. Some of the degree recipients themselves complained (in response to my survey of their views) about the fact that admissions policies are not rigorous enough to weed out individuals who want a degree but are not committed to intellectual work.

The area of study involved in the various nontraditional degree programs are largely limited to the social sciences, with particular emphasis on education. This limitation is easily understood because the majority of people seeking these degrees are interested in education, business, or the social or health services. Many of them are interested in developing an administrative career. While many seek the opportunity for advanced study because of a sincere interest in improving their background or simply for personal satisfaction, others are seeking a degree almost solely because of its value in professional advancement. The concentration of these programs in the social sciences--especially in aspects of the social sciences which relate themselves to practical problems--has obvious advantages, but also is the source of one of the greatest concerns about the quality of such degrees. Typically, the social sciences are not as rigorously defined as the natural sciences, mathematics, and even some of the humanities. The concepts are less well defined, and the generalizations are so qualified as not to be subject to rigorous definition of practical application. The organization of these fields is not sequential, and it is often difficult to determine whether a particular set of concepts or a problem is being approached at an advanced and sophisticated level or at a relatively elementary one.

Some of the problems in psychology appear to have taken on a humanistic orientation, often in combination with a clinical psychology emphasis. Many psychologists are very dubious about the humanistic orientation as being based more in effect than in substantive research. Clinical psychology itself is an applied field which should not be designated by a Ph.D., even though that is still the most commonly used degree. When programs are set up for such

esoteric concepts as educational leadership and middle management, the problem becomes even more complex. If the social sciences themselves are not well defined, then practical fields of endeavor that cut across these are even less clear. There is a tendency in such programs to cut a narrow swath through a wide number of different fields, with the choice heavily depending upon the subjective judgments of individuals and the probable appeal of the materials and topics covered to the student. When fields themselves are ill defined, faculty members trained in single disciplines, no matter how strong their scholarship in these disciplines, may find difficulty in treating such materials in a sophisticated way that is still relevant to the level and concerns of the student. Since concepts are not rigorously defined, students with a high level of verbal facility may loquaciously express themselves using this terminology but lack precise understanding of the meaning and limitation of their statements.

There is a tendency (because many books and articles in these fields are very wordy) to use condensed materials, of which the full meaning is apparent only when one has an extensive background. Yet most of these students are being exposed only to these selected materials. Research results in education and the social sciences are often limited generalizations based upon highly subjective judgments and procedures, but they are often seized upon by writers of these summaries as the basis for unqualified statements. These statements may be assimilated by individuals lacking adequate research background as presenting principles that can be readily applied to actual situations. In brief, external degrees in education and the social sciences can readily succumb to superficiality. At times they do this on even the best university campuses

with specific faculty members and students, but the limited controls of non-traditional degree programs make this weakness even more probably. The implications for any dissertation or culminating task engaged in by a graduate student are obvious, and it therefore comes as no surprise that the judgments of some persons who have reviewed dissertations in a number of nontraditional degree programs have found many of them--particularly among the earlier ones--quite unsatisfactory.

As with other aspects of the nontraditional graduate programs, the faculty involved can be viewed as a strength or as a weakness. The case can be made (as by Nova University) that, by selecting lecturers of outstanding reputations over the country, candidates for the Ed.D. can be exposed to a number of outstanding persons beyond what they would experience in a traditional program. On the other hand, the limited exposure to these persons may have less significant scholarly implications than are thereby implied. It is true that face-to-face contact with scholars has in it elements that are not possible by careful perusal of their writings. Yet anyone who wants to fully assimilate the ideas or the research of a scholar will shortly find that one or two lectures are totally inadequate in this regard, both because of time and because of the necessity of some concentrated thought on the part of the individual trying to understand what has been done and reported.

The extensive use of adjunct or part-time faculty has many other problems. One of these is revealed by review of the lists of people who serve as adjunct faculty in various programs. Many of the names are not widely known, and they are not really leaders in their particular fields. Indeed, reflection suggests that those people who are already heavily involved in research and scholarly

activities will not generally wish to take on the burden of an additional lectureship, project, paper readings, and the like. In some programs, one finds a number of semiretired people of outstanding reputations. One needs to keep in mind that frequently the aging scholar turns more to philosophical considerations and to a much less rigorous approach to his discipline than was true at an earlier stage. If rigor achieved with a loss of relevance may be wasted effort (as some of us may naturally feel when we find problems have not been solved through rigorous research), the insistence on relevance without regard for rigor (although more attractive to some people) is equally unpromising.

In the main, adjunct professors of nontraditional degree programs have little involvement in making the major decisions in the operation of the institution and, in many cases, relatively little to say about the nature of a course or the materials used in it. In many respects, their role is more like that of an elementary or secondary school teacher than it is a professor; that is, programs, courses, and materials are defined as a part of the necessary structure of such programs, and individuals are hired at relatively low rates to present, annotate, and footnote these materials. Selection is often a problem. Those individuals who are outstanding scholars and also heavily involved in their own institutions are unlikely to take on additional chores, so not infrequently, the final choice of an individual in a particular center offering a program must be expeditiously solved by finding a person who will take the assignment. This tendency is aggravated by the fact that the stipends offered are generally not very attractive, and this kind of activity will bring no recognition or advancement in the institution with which the person is affiliated.

There is another issue that nontraditional degree programs of the free-standing type seem to have deliberately ignored. They do not seek clearance from other institutions before asking faculty members to take on assignments. I have found numerous cases in which individuals involved in a nontraditional degree program were taking part without the knowledge of their dean or other university officials. This, in turn, brings into question the extent to which facilities of universities, such as faculty offices, library, computer services, and the like, may be used through the agency of the faculty member associated with students in a nontraditional degree program. Study of faculty load over a period of years suggests that most external overloads in teaching or consulting detract from the amount of time that the faculty member spends on his full-time campus assignment. Often, too, these extra assignments involve a considerable amount of time away from the campus, the use of the phone, preparation of reports or handout materials, and the like. Many, probably most, universities now have rules about the amount of off-campus activity a faculty member can take on; but faculty members tend to ignore such rules on the grounds that a scholar works night and day, and it is nobody's business how he uses his time as long as it is within the realm of scholarship. There is one other reason why there ought to be clearance by an external degree-granting unit with a university before faculty members in that university are approached to serve as adjunct faculty. In some cases, the programs provided by an external degree program are in direct competition with programs offered by the university with which an adjunct faculty member is affiliated. One cannot assume that faculty members will avoid such conflicting commitments. And even if the university is not worried about the

competition, the administration and the board of the university may wish to avoid giving any semblance of approval to a nontraditional degree program by involvement of its full-time faculty.

As some of the previous comments indicate, there are problems with the definition of programs and also with the availability of resources necessary for the satisfactory operation of programs. One type of nontraditional degree program (sometimes not even so designated) is that in which a program already exists on a campus and an identical program is taught at one or more places off campus, frequently with instructors from the main campus traveling to the centers at which the courses are offered. Even in such programs, there are some concerns about quality because of the fact that people who are full-time employed and taking classes in the late afternoon or evening may not have ready access to library facilities and often do not put in the amount of work that students do when they are in a campus situation. These programs are usually stretched out over a longer period of time because there is no condensation of class meetings and students can seldom take more than one course at a time, with the result that attainment of a degree requires several years. Nevertheless, this offering of an identical degree at various points off the campus, staffed entirely or principally by people from the campus, provides controls which are absent to many other nontraditional degree programs.

Another possibility is the provision of an adapted program off campus. The adaptations are of various types; such as the amount of time required in classrooms or the modification of materials or substitution of other materials in place of those generally used in the course. Some adaptations may be caused by the lack of facilities at the center as compared with those on

campus. As long as these adaptations are within the range of adaptations from one year to another, or even from one section to another on a campus, the offering of an adapted course at a distance may still be regarded as determined and monitored by the home faculty.

Unique off-campus course programs have more difficulties. Home campus faculty members have no great incentive to develop courses for a special clientele when they are not offering them on their own campus, and they may have qualms about the quality of a unique program adapted to a particular clientele. When a program is made up of unique courses addressed to a particular audience, even the affiliation of a program with a traditional institution offers no safeguards of quality because no control is provided on the home campus. I have already suggested that, with full-time students in a program in a campus situation, a considerable amount of individualization may be allowed and students may be given a great deal of freedom in what they do simply because it is relatively easy to maintain some checks on them from day to day. Such freedom in an external degree program would, in theory, work if everyone were highly motivated and placed his primary priority on the educational program. In fact, a high degree of structure has been generally found necessary to attract students to the program, to insure that students know what they are expected to do in the program, and to assure that a sufficient number of students can be brought together in a group to provide an economical approach to instruction, materials preparation, and the like.

In on-campus programs there is usually some attention given to the continuity, sequence, and cumulative impact of a group of courses in a program. One of the criticisms of off-campus programs that run for relatively

long periods of time has been that the time lapse from one course to another and from the beginning to the end of a single course is such that the student loses the continuity, sequence, and the synthesizing or integrative aspects of education. More concentrated programing does not necessarily help this problem, for, in the nontraditional degree program in which a number of individual instructors take responsibility for various segments of the program, there is a tendency for each to perform his own chore without much awareness or concern about what others are doing. A number of nontraditional degree programs show some concern for this. First of all, they point out that, having mature people in a program relevant to their work, one may assume that individuals will interrelate experiences by tying them to his or her job. Attempts have also been made by the use of study manuals to bring out some of these connections. Some programs include projects that at various stages demand that the individual undertake to organize and relate what he has so far learned to some problem of concern in the community or in relationship to his work. But in some of the programs, the problem of organization and interconnection is further complicated by the range of materials in the course. When programs and courses are based upon the synthesizing of ideas, concepts, and principles that cross a number of disciplines in ways which have not been done before, there must be some doubt that even the faculty integrates the materials. The experiences of some years ago in attempting to develop broad gauge interdisciplinary general education courses is not irrelevant. Most of these ended up as a potpourri of materials drawn from a number of different related disciplines, but relatively unorganized and never quite jelling into a truly satisfactory course for either faculty members or students.

The developers and administrators of free-standing nontraditional degree programs usually admit that they are unable to supply adequate library resources, computer facilities, and the like. One excuse for this is a library available at the central spot would not be readily accessible to most students. A second argument is that there are library facilities on university and college campuses and in municipalities that are generally available to people, and therefore it would be an unreasonable duplication of resources for a non-traditional institution to develop its own library. The argument is that every individual has a right to use state and municipal libraries and the libraries of publicly supported educational institutions. In a few cases, there is a statement that, if some fee is required, the program will pay it. This argument is weak on several counts insofar as meeting the real needs of students involved in nontraditional degree programs. Many colleges and universities are having difficulty in maintaining an adequate library for their own students. The purchase of books, their loss and deterioration, the need for multiple copies to supply the needs of various courses are costly realities. If to the demands of an institution's own faculty and students are added the expectations of a number of unenrolled individuals in the community, the situation can readily get out of hand. Even in a state university, the first obligation is to its own students. The second problem is that even full-time students may have difficulty in getting particular books or materials. Some materials may have to be restricted to use in the library simply because of demand. Nontraditional degree students are likely to be completely frustrated by attempts to get particular books from a nearby college or university library. Their time commitments will probably not permit repeated

visits, and they may find it difficult to spend sufficient time in a library to read materials that are restricted to the premises. Some programs have attempted to provide access to a bibliography on a particular topic using computer retrieved facilities with the avowed expectation that this process will eliminate searching the library for relevant materials. At the same time, experience indicates that many of these computerized bibliographies contain a large amount of irrelevant material and sometimes miss some of the most significant items. Furthermore, a graduate student really ought to have the experience of perusing a large number of books and journals rather quickly for ideas and for the location of those items particularly relevant to the immediate problem upon which he is working.

In some programs, computer access is provided so that the students can have various analyses made of any data collected. There is reason to doubt the adequacy of nontraditional degree students in research and statistical methodology. A number of individuals, in responding to my questionnaire, indicated that inadequate attention was given to methodology, and that only if students had had extensive experience in research and statistics before entering the program would they have enough knowledge to deal effectively with data. Perusal of some materials provided in two nontraditional degree programs indicates that the diluted treatment of statistics presented is grossly inadequate. To encourage students with such weak backgrounds to collect extensive data and then have it analyzed by complex statistical methodologies using computer techniques is hardly consonant with good scholarship. In programs in which a marked condensation of time requirements is present, obvious attempts have been observed to develop digests and short

cuts that purport to give the individual the understanding of some significant ideas without the necessity of doing the extensive reading and even drudgery that is usually required to attain mystery.

I have commented heretofore on the matter of superficiality in some of the materials in nontraditional degree programs. The response from proponents of these programs might well be that this is simply an introduction and that students are expected to do a great deal of additional work on their own. The question of whether or not they do this work remains unanswered. One might equally remark that, in most courses on campuses, the majority of students learn only a fraction of the materials actually covered in a course and, if that be true with students in nontraditional degree programs, it must be evident that they learn very little. Review of a few theses which made some use of statistics would certainly indicate that this is so.

In addressing the problems of nontraditional degree programs, it is certainly appropriate, consonant with present-day concerns, to raise the issue of how benefits and costs are related. The free-standing nontraditional degree programs provide minimal services and pay rather small stipends to adjunct faculty, accepting no responsibility for contributions to their fringe benefits. The argument, of course, is that the later are already covered by the full-time employing institution, but any overload employment of faculty members detracts, in some sense, from his or her full-time assignment. Hence, free-standing nontraditional degree programs can be described as parasites on the traditional universities--that is, they tend to use the faculty and the facilities of these institutions without assuming a full share of the costs involved. Because of this low level of services and resources provided by

the free-standing institution, most nontraditional degree candidates are paying at least the full costs of their education and, in some cases, much more than the actual costs. Dollar for dollar the nontraditional degree candidate gets far less than he would from a traditional public or private university which includes many additional services beyond the actual provision of instruction. The benefits of the nontraditional programs to their students are certainly not to be ignored. The availability and convenience of these degrees, the possibility of maintaining a full-time job, and the apparent negotiability of many of these degrees into vertical or horizontal mobility and salary increases, as well as personal satisfaction, which is important to many of the degree recipients, are by no means negligible benefits. Although some individuals are frank to say that they doubt that the particular degree they got is as good as they would have gotten through a longer program or a full-time, on-campus program, they find the possession of the degree (and, in some cases, the relevance of what they have learned to their immediate job) sufficient justification for the expenditures. Of the many questionnaires I read which were returned by graduates of the various programs, only a very few (three or four) expressed some feeling that the degree and the educational experience were not worth the cost. Because these were people who had had difficulty in getting acceptance of the degree, it remains uncertain whether they were discounting the quality of what they learned or were presently more concerned that the dubious reputation of the institution had not enabled them to cash in on their degree. A number of individuals did express concern about the reputation of an institution. If some of these nontraditional degree enterprises fail or are discontinued--and

the number and range of problems which beset them suggest that this is almost inevitably true--degree holders from defunct institutions may have second thoughts about the benefits.

There are three significant issues that need to be addressed. One is whether the charges to students are in reasonable proportion to the benefits that they receive. Perhaps no one can answer this question but the individuals themselves, and if they are satisfied, perhaps no one should second-guess them. Yet we are in an era where honesty in advertising and consumer rights are major concerns. For those institutions that are not nonprofit, what is a reasonable rate of return? Though none of the institutions at which I looked could be considered a degree mill, several of them are clearly being run because of the profits involved. In some cases, the profits are turned to support the home campus. In others, the profits have gone into increased salaries, bonuses, and, in some cases, to increased staff and services. One can scarcely quarrel with the profit-making institution if it puts back some portion of its profits for survival in uncertain periods in the future or for the development of an endowment which might support increased facilities or services. Indeed, one cannot condemn a profit-making educational institution for paying dividends to its stockholders, which involves only reasonable returns on their investment in money and time. But one may question the motivations of individuals when profits become a major concern in operating a nontraditional degree program. In at least one of these programs, I have been told first-hand that the profits made on the nontraditional degree program were the difference between the main campus operating in the red or black. In this case, there are some commitments to meeting educational needs, but I know the situation and

people well enough to doubt whether time and energy would be devoted to the nontraditional programs if the returns were of no significance or if they operated at any loss.

A second issue relates to the parasitic relationship of these programs to existing institutions. To the extent that they minimize their expenditures by using the staff and facilities of other institutions, they pile upon an already burdened system of higher education additional threats to program quality. A few programs have made extensive use of professionals employed in private practice or in various social service institutions. In this case, the individuals may see the work with these degree programs as having immediate advantages in their own work and, to some extent, they may be judges of how they divide their time. But such programs clearly become practitioner programs and should be so designated.

A third issue is that a number of nontraditional institutions are using traditional academic degree designations when the nature of their programs clearly indicates either that these are not the appropriate degrees or that the degrees which they offer are substandard in comparison with those offered in traditional institutions. The Ed.D. provided by one of the institutions reviewed in depth is a reasonable degree characterization relative to the objectives. It may very well be, although we cannot be certain because standards have not been directly appraised, as good as Ed.D.'s offered on typical campuses. If the degree given were more specifically related to the nature of the program, it is quite likely that the external degree programs would be somewhat less attractive to the student; and, in some cases, as in clinical psychology, the benefits would be greatly reduced because many states do not recognize the Doctor of Psychology degree for professional practice.

It might appear from the preceding comments that my review of non-traditional degree programs has generated a thoroughly negative reaction toward all of them. In fact this is not true, but there are several points that need attention. First, I think we need to take a more rigorous look at what it meant by a nontraditional degree program and recognize that among these there are programs, such as at Rand, in which the quality of the work and the quality of the staff is as good or better than it may be on many of our traditional campuses. The issue in the Rand program is not one of quality, but one of continuing commitment to the program and of academic freedom and autonomy in it. The visiting committee of the Western Association was apparently satisfied on these points.

Second, we should not too readily assume that external degree programs of existing educational institutions are necessarily satisfactory or even that the institutional motivations are entirely pure. I find what is to me convincing evidence that some institutions have extended themselves further--both geographically and educationally--than they can provide adequate quality controls with the faculty resources from the main campus.

Third, in the case of free-standing institutions, we need to know far more about the probable continuance of the program and about the prospect of maintaining more adequate standards than the reviews thus far made indicate. And in all cases we need to have more concrete evidence about the quality of the degrees produced and the appropriateness of the degree to the program results.

In the next section of this report, I will comment in some detail on the review of student records and on the nature and evaluation of student papers or dissertations in several of the nontraditional graduate degree programs.

Review of Records, Projects, and Dissertations

A review was carried out of records maintained on students and the dissertations or other projects completed by doctoral degree candidates at various stages of their programs. From the questionnaire responses, I selected a sample of individuals from each of four doctoral programs. Three of the doctoral programs are offered in one institution, and the fourth involves another institution. A fifth program had been recently reviewed for accreditation, and some comments were already available on its doctoral dissertations.

We requested from the four programs copies of dissertations or other works of students and a copy of all official records maintained on the graduates. The major effort here was to look at the ultimate product of these degree programs and also to determine the nature and detail of the official records maintained in the central office. Again, anonymity is, for obvious reasons, preserved.

Institution C

"Institution C" was organized in the late sixties with an eminent psychologist as president. The literature indicates that the institution offers numerous specializations, including clinical psychology, psychology, psychotherapy, and perspectives on subcultures and social structures. Early emphasis appears to have been on social-clinical psychology, followed a few years later by psychosocial development and postsecondary education. Twenty-three theses were produced in 1975-76. According to the accreditation team review, about one-fourth of these were marginal or not acceptable. Whether

this judgment recognized it or not, dissertations in clinical psychology, even in traditional institutions, are often quite different from the usual doctoral dissertations. In fact, the Doctor of Psychology degree would be more appropriate than the Ph.D. for clinical psychology, but most university departments still use the Ph.D. There is some justification for this in that there are state laws specifying the Ph.D. for clinical psychologists.

This program operates in close proximity to a major university and uses some of its resources. Perhaps only the social-problem and action orientation of the president prevents the program from being offered under university auspices. The program seems to be reasonably adequate, but the D.Psych. would be a more appropriate degree.

Institution D

"Institution D" was apparently an outgrowth of an association founded by some psychologists with a particular emphasis on the humanistic aspects of psychology. This group included a number of well-known psychologists representing a group heavily engrossed in therapy, personal development, and humanistic concerns. There have been some changes in the central office personnel, and there has been a marked difference of opinion among various individuals as to the nature of the doctoral dissertation (and perhaps also of the doctoral program). The records report, with no detail, that individuals have been enrolled in a research and studies program over eight or nine trimesters. Each of these periods of study is supposedly approved by some mentor to whom the individual presents written reports. The range of experiences reported includes workshops, conferences, travel, and therapy (both experienced and administered). The records and communications suggest that anything that a

student thought worthwhile was accepted as satisfactory. In some cases, it appeared to me that the approved experience for this enrollment was exactly what the person would have been doing in any case. The transcript also shows the degree awarded, the dissertation title, and the committ membership.

One student wrote a dessertation on the creative growth of older persons. The dissertation has 65 pages and includes a 30-minute set of slides and films with a descriptive booklet. This dissertation reports on the creative activities of a group of senior citizens in a storefront craft workshop. To a considerable extent, it is a report of the individual experiences of these citizens and of reactions to them. The episodes described frequently report a comment of a senior citizen, which is interpreted as indicative of great insight or unusual alertness. The episodes are no doubt ones from which the student got a thrill from the fact that a person verging on senility in many respects suddenly displayed a fairly high level of intellectual reaction. There is little research in this dissertation, and while there is some relationship to other literature, it seems to me that it must primarily be regarded as a report of an experience in working with older people. It is interesting that the student, in the questionnaire responses, expressed doubt about the ability of most students in such a program being able to do a quality dissertation.

The second student from "Institution D" whose records were examined in some detail produced a synthesis of extensive material on aging. Apparently this was done, to a large extent, because she had been teaching a course in gerontology in a medical school. Perhaps the most unusual thing was that she had three Ph.D.'s on her reviewing committee, whereas most the the review

committees had one or two doctorates--not necessarily Ph.D.'s--and one or two people with a master's. One committee member apparently had no academic degree. (There is much made in some of the printed materials about the use of peers on evaluation teams. Apparently "peers" refers to individuals whose status is more like that of the degree candidates in background and experiences than is the usual Ph.D. faculty member.)

Casual review of the material produced by this student indicates that she has drawn very widely from relevant material and has done a reasonably good job of putting it together, but it is not a dissertation in any sense. Rather, it is more like a course syllabus or resource that any faculty member might prepare for a new course.

A third student got his degree in 1976. His dissertation title was: "Learning and Exchange: Theory, Design, and Implementation of the Learning Exchange Model." This title and the range of materials drawn upon place this work somewhat closer to the usual type of dissertation than the others examined. However, this work, like that of most of the people that I reviewed from these free-standing, psychologically-oriented institutes, exhibits a range of concerns about various therapeutic approaches, workshops, self-awareness, and the like, which makes even this dissertation a very different treatment from what one would find in an ordinary doctoral program. It is not research. Rather, it is either the development of a new theory or a selective synthesis of ideas drawn from existing ones. The fact that three out of five members of the examining committee lacked the doctorate is not irrelevant.

A fourth student, in his questionnaire responses, indicated that his doctoral program was to him merely an incident in a life that had already been

devoted to humanistic concerns and had been productive of some 18 books. Over the time that he was associated with "Institution D," he reported a series of projects dealing with such things as foundation for mind research, psychophysical education, the martial arts, nutrition, autogenic training, bioenergetics, and Yoga. From his rather extensive questionnaire responses, I gather that he had been engaged in these activities for some time and simply reported them as part of his relationship with the institution. He then submitted a dissertation on "Sekhmet: Dimensions in Mystery" and received his degree in 1974. There is also an indication that formal association with the institution was limited in time and that his high level of prior activity and productivity was given basic consideration in the awarding of the degree. The document accepted as a dissertation is a very curious one. It contains a limited amount of material by the student and is, in large part, taken up with the reports of a young woman of her contacts, while under hypnosis, with the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet. The body of the dissertation is the report by this young woman of what had transpired during the trance. The degree candidate raises questions about the nature and meaning of the experience and relates it to some other cases with which he had worked. With a little effort, the document might be turned into science fiction or fantasy, or even become the basis for a revival of ancient Egyptian religious belief. It surely would not be acceptable as a doctoral dissertation in any traditional program.

Yet another student engaged in a series of research projects on primitive ceremonial art, the relationship between art and religion, psychological research on schizophrenic mysticism, dream theory and interpretation, and a few other activities that would definitely be considered offbeat in a traditional

psychology program. At one point this student draws upon some material from a workshop for a definition of humanistic psychology as an area of psychology devoted to the discovery of meaning and values in one's life. Her reports are highly personal documents rather than any contribution to additional knowledge useful to others. This very characteristic raises some questions about how any review committee can be highly critical of whatever product is turned in. If the individual is sincere, expresses himself or herself reasonably well, and presumably has gained a great deal of personal insight by the experience, how could the committee turn down any product? This particular dissertation was entitled: "Prayers Made Visible: A Notebook on Creativity and Change." It is largely an interesting collection of pictures with a few comments on their significance. Undoubtedly much time and effort were expended on it. Was it a dissertation? Definitely not!

The next person whose records I reviewed had been engaged in private therapeutic practice and had developed something that she calls core therapy. Her dissertation was entitled: "Core Therapy: A Way to Personal Change and Growth." She describes her dissertation as "the organizing and conceptualizing of core therapy experiences in a format that would be readable and meaningful to lay persons as well as professionals" and further remarks that "the whole process became an evaluation of me and my work." Again, we see the difficulty in rejecting the efforts of an individual when it is put in this kind of framework. The dissertation is the report of a thirty-day workshop. Although readily accepted by the committee, composed of two Ph.D.'s and one master's, there was some later questioning of the appropriateness of this document as a doctoral dissertation by another individual affiliated with the

institution. There is good reason to express doubt. The dissertation largely reports on the experiences of the various people in the workshop. One of the apparent assumptions of the author is that many of the difficulties in people's lives are caused by earlier experiences that have fled their consciousness but are nevertheless the source of great pressure on the individual because of the storage of the information and feelings and because of the walls that have to be held intact around them. One can be forgiven some doubts about the authenticity of the finding in this workshop that everyone, in some way or other, had undergone sexual abuse from one parent or the other at a very early age. There is no science, there is no research, there is only a realistic portrayal of people interacting with each other and revealing their inner selves (whether real or imagined). The questioning of the caliber of this material led the chairman of the doctoral committee to retort, in obviously irritated though restrained language, that this person had fulfilled the original contract, which was a professional rather than a research program, and the whole matter of questioning, after the committee had approved the document, was inappropriate in any case. The student involved here undoubtedly is an interesting and highly verbal person. Something of her attitude toward research is indicated by the fact that, in one of the projects that she had proposed, she was to develop a questionnaire study to survey the impact of core therapy. She reported that she had spent a little time on this and concluded that it was very superficial and not worth doing. As an alternative (apparently not approved until after the fact) she reported engaging in psychic approaches to therapy, investigation of astrology, the therapeutic use of LSD, the use of Psychic massage, psychic

readings, card readings, zonal foot massage, bioenergetics, Esalin Institute workshops, and a few more. In her final evaluation of her program, she remarks: "I feel alive, energetic, interested, growing, evolving, and expanding." And, consistent with her interpretation of the purposes of the program, she apparently gained much from it. It obviously was not a Ph.D. experience.

The last person whose work I reviewed in detail wrote a "dissertation" entitled: "Something is Right With This Child: A positive Approach to Learning Disability." She received her degree in 1976, and her committee was made up of three Ph.D.'s, one M.A., and one M.S.W. This study is a rather interesting discourse based on the point of view that there is always something good about a child and that, if one approaches the situation positively, considerable improvement and growth can be evoked. This is not an academic dissertation or even a master's thesis. It is a report of enthusiasm and convictions buttressed by reference to other writings. Again, because of the emphasis on personal development in this program, any committee would find it difficult to reject the report.

There is good reason to view "Institution D" as one that has moved so far from traditional degree definitions into the humanistic concerns for personal development that most of the degrees granted are unmerited. Most of the people who come into the program had extensive experience and were generally well educated and highly verbal. Most of them were successful people in the general area of individual and group therapy and probably could have met reasonable and respectable standards had these been imposed. It is clear that there has recently been some realization in "Institution D" of the

lack of standards, but one can only wonder if a really significant change can be made without a complete change in the character and staff of the institution. The experience of looking at "Institution D" raises several questions. First, in the nature of its organization, one can only speculate about the length of the life of the institution. It is not entirely clear to me just who the key figures are in the actual institutional operation, but it is clear that within recent months there has been, at least verbally, an insistence that the institution is changing its orientation and insisting on a higher and more academic interpretation of a degree. This suggests that there are relatively few people who are really making the decisions and that one or two individuals can make a major change in the character of such an institution. If it is agreed that the practices of the institution have been outside of the usual academic standards of quality and rigor, how can one be sure that a shift to quality and rigor at this point in time will be permanent? The problem here has several aspects. Such free-standing enterprises devoted to a phase or interpretation of some aspects of a discipline are not subject to the usual review and enforcement of standards such as would be true in a department on a university campus in which all aspects of that discipline are represented. Indeed, the organization of such an institution suggests dissatisfaction with the standards and points of view of the academic psychologist: But such an institution, having no faculty and having no representation of the full range of concerns in a discipline, is a very uncertain enterprise. It is uncertain how the institution will determine its standards and how consistent it will be in enforcing them. Lacking a larger university context, there can be no assurance that if (as often happens on a university campus) the faculty

in a particular discipline falls into error, the graduate council or graduate dean will intervene and correct the situation. And the review of the individuals who enroll in these institutions suggests that they may themselves be more therapeutically or clinically oriented, have little interest in research, and be completely unwilling to subject themselves to the discipline required to acquire mastery of research tools. A doctoral degree in humanistic psychology is distinctly a different kind of enterprise from a nontraditional graduate degree in public service, educational administration, or the like. The latter fields draw upon numerous disciplines, and they offer employment in a wide variety of enterprises. Moreover, they are intensely practical in their orientation and the possibility of becoming obsessed with mysticism, "-ologies," and unusual and esoteric therapies is minimized.

Institution E

This institution offers three nontraditional degrees: Doctor of Public Administration, Doctor of Education for community college faculty, and Doctor of Education for educational leaders. The questionnaire responses from the recipients had generally indicated satisfaction with the program. These persons undertake two major job-related studies as part of their program requirements. I received copies of these for five persons and found them of varying length and quality. One person employed by the state undertook as the first job-related project the determination of the most effective and efficient method of training 519 trade and industrial certified teachers. The second study was to minimize the use of personnel and facilities in the 653 trade and industrial schools in the state. Each of these studies involved from 60 to 70 pages and contained a fairly extensive bibliography and numerous

appendices. They seemed adequate and relevant. They were not--and were not intended to be--of Ph.D. dissertation character or quality.

The second person was employed in a hospital and wrote one report on rehabilitation of spinal cord injury cases and a second on the multiple accreditation dilemmas of public hospitals. The first of these reports drew heavily on a wide range of literature and seems to have done a good job in organizing relevant information. The second, dealing with accreditation, is an excellent treatment of a difficult problem and extends to the consideration of some alternatives and their implications, though, as might be expected, no solution was found.

The third person taking the D.P.A. worked on an alternative method of delivery of human services through neighborhood facilities and, as a second project, worked on neighborhood facility analysis. No doubt both were useful studies, but neither one was, in my judgment, of any great significance as a contribution to new insights.

The next individual developed a complex proposal with two sections in it: one, a proposal for a graduate program in public administration, and the second, the development of an external baccalaureate program plan and implementation. I was unable to determine from the materials at hand whether the first topic was rejected and the second one then provided as a substitute, or whether the original specifications called for two independent sections. In any case, it seemed to me that the paper was about the level of a committee report for initiating a new degree. I would not have thought either project acceptable as a major part of the D.P.A. requirement. The second project was to determine a collective bargaining policy for a state system of higher

education and consider its implications. This is a substantial study. However, these studies were supposed to promote change. Could such a study actually affect the bargaining situation?

Although I concluded that the students in the D.P.A. program probably do a substantial amount of reading and produce job-related reports that can be quite extensive in treatment, I still find myself somewhat dubious about the quality and the amount of work required for this degree. I doubt that the individuals involved in the program do anything like as much work as is required for D.P.A.'s in traditional programs. I also think that, since the projects are immediately job related, their focus is so narrow that the degree recipients would lack both the broad orientation to relevant information and the mastery of the necessary research techniques for studying a wide array of problems comprehended in the field of public administration. This program would do well to introduce some of the checks and balances that are used in its Ed.D. program for educational leaders.

The second "Institution E" program that I reviewed was the Ed.D. for community college faculty. The first study that I looked at was "The Effects of Teaching Interpersonal Skills on Interpersonal Functioning and Intrapersonal Perception." This was an extensive project involving a tremendous amount of work. It was focused almost entirely on the community college in which the person happened to be teaching. This is, of course, consistent with the intent of the program--that people study problems in their own situation.

Another person wrote on the effects of test construction and multiple-choice item arrangements upon test performance of students with varying levels of anxiety. This study was markedly different from any other that I looked at in

the "Institution E" program. In the first place, it rose well above the local limitations in the choice of the problem--that is to say, this person, although employed in a community college, chose a problem and a mode of study which could be productive in any educational institution. Furthermore, this study used much more in the way of statistics and measurement than any other nontraditional degree project that I have reviewed. Apparently the person in question is a very able one and had achieved an advanced educational level before becoming involved in the "E" program.

Another project took on the task of analyzing the relationship among personality types, locus of control, and mathematics class enrollment and classification at a community college. This is a rather elaborate and complex task, and the person did a fairly good job with a tough problem.

Another person developed and evaluated a program for training social work field instructors in performance--oriented teaching. This also seemed to be a soundly done job and a useful one.

Still another developed a competency-based model for home economics food service programs in community colleges.

All of the persons in this program are exposed to readings in a number of topics, and the projects are presumed to be a laboratory in which the person demonstrates his or her ability to apply some of the things learned. I detect two major weaknesses in this program. One is that it makes excessive use of community college faculty members to coordinate the various parts of the program. I am well aware that community college people sometimes feel that the four-year college and university people don't understand their problems. However, in developing a substantive area in a degree program, it seems questionable

to use as adjunct faculty community college faculty members whose experiences have been entirely limited to that level. In addition to this, the projects in which these students engage are within their own institutions and permit (perhaps actually encourage) a very narrow view to be adapted by the individual carrying on the project. Indeed, I suspect in most cases, when a person who is part of an enterprise engages in a study of that enterprise, he would do well to avoid introduction of vastly different ideas about how certain programs might be defined or carried out. The several study guides that I saw reflected something of the limited or tunnel vision of which I am speaking. These were, in one sense, reasonably well done but, on the other hand, they were limited to the community college orientation. I shall return to discussion of this point after talking about the Ed.D. program for educational leaders.

The Ed.D. program for educational leaders has probably had the most concentration attention of all three. These individuals have generally presented four products: a mini-project, a midi-project, and two maxi-projects. This sequence of tasks is well developed and should be of significant value to the student. Each student is required to present a preliminary plan for his project, which is read and approved--usually by two people. The individual then moves ahead to complete the project and sends it in for reading and critiquing. In the cases which I reviewed, several individuals had had their original proposals sent back several times and had to rewrite their projects and provide more information in several cases. I was impressed with the extent of interchange and felt that, in many cases, the benefits to the students could be far greater than for the average graduate student in a traditional program setting in large classes, doing relatively little writing, and

receiving limited feedback on whatever is produced. Records show also that in this program students are advised of their progress at various stages and are notified when their terminal point is being reached. While there are opportunities for extension of the time and these extensions are apparently granted with adequate justification, the conduct of this program makes it clear to individuals that they are to keep on schedule, get things done at assigned dates, or seek an extension. If they do not do so, their candidacy may be terminated. I was favorably impressed, both with the quality and the amount of work represented in the four projects. Any nontraditional program involving limited contact between students and professors ought to include something of this pattern--that is, a sequence of tasks of increasing complexity and length which provide the basis for careful review of the person's progress and the possibility of feedback with continuing demand for improvement before going on to the next stage.

The review of records and completed projects in these several programs highlights the importance of having several projects for an individual to do during the engagement with the program. Such projects provide a basis for checking on what the person has accomplished and how well he or she has synthesized and organized it. This, in turn, requires someone reading these projects in detail and writing reports back to the individual about both good and bad points. Ultimately, someone must make a decision with regard to acceptability or nonacceptability. This approach can assure continuity, sequential development or progress, and standards. In contrast, a program in which a person agrees to do certain things and then simply writes a few sentences of evaluation of the impact really provides no confirmation that

the work was done or that the individual profited from it. Neither does it provide the opportunity to give direction to the individual as to what additional reading or activity is needed.

Continuing interchange between a student and a mentor could also ameliorate several other weaknesses of nontraditional programs. First, an individual focusing on projects relating to his or her immediate job may be so much immersed in local idiosyncrasies and limitations that the educational experience itself is very narrow. Second, an individual may also focus on the same idea or issue throughout the program and unduly limit his reading in the process. One individual did exactly this. A sequence of increasingly complicated and sophisticated projects would force the person to demonstrate that he has indeed delved further into certain areas and reveal whether he can make application of them. A third possibility of some concern (entirely ignored in the materials I have seen from the nontraditional graduate degree programs) is that an individual may hire someone else to do his work. If there has been enough exchange between an individual and the mentor, it is quite likely that the mentor will perceive in a product phrases or ideas that will cast doubt on the authorship. I saw one such case in which the mentor was very clearly saying to the individual: "From what I've seen before of your work, I can't really believe that you wrote this." There is still a fourth possibility of some concern. An administrator seeking a nontraditional degree may direct or coerce some of his staff to engage in a study or carry out a project which he then reports as his own work. I read one set of reports where this appeared to be a distinct possibility.

One other deficiency is pointed up by this review of the final products in these programs. In only one of the projects, dissertations, or other tasks completed by individuals whose work I reviewed was there any evidence that the person had really mastered and was able to use research tools. Indeed, in the approval of proposals I saw no encouragement for use of such tools. It is also clear that study guides give little attention to such skills, perhaps because they are not easily mastered in a limited period of time. One may also suspect that even the mentors in these various programs are more oriented to practice than they are to scholarly methodology. The questionnaires from perhaps half a dozen students in various programs pointed up this problem of lack of mastery of research techniques. Another way to speak to this point is to comment on my own experience with the dissertations and projects. When I was planning to collect student papers and projects in the various programs, I was concerned about the extent to which I would be able to understand them. In practice, I found no such problem. These people are dealing with common educational, sociological, and psychological issues or problems in only more slightly sophisticated ways than they would if they had done no work toward an advance degree.

However, with only a very few exceptions, the degree recipients whom I contacted by questionnaire felt that they had received benefits and self-satisfaction in accordance with their efforts and expenditures. They were even quite understanding with regard to the fact that many people did not fully accept the degree. The number who claimed to have received salary increases and promotions because of the degree was surprising, although it remained uncertain in some cases as to whether the degree was the major

factor. The central issue that I came back to, however, is that in almost every case it seems to me that the individual has received something significant and worthwhile out of the experience. But whether that gain deserves recognition by a degree designation which is also used for traditional degrees is a question. I have the least difficulty with the Ed.D. for education leadership offered by "Institution E" because it is designated as a practitioner-oriented degree, had already had a number of reviews, and has obviously been tightened up. Moreover, the Ed.D. of traditional universities is a highly variable commodity.

I think it quite unlikely that the research orientation of the Ph.D. can be maintained in these nontraditional patterns unless some continuing and close interaction and direction are given to each student by a mentor personally involved in and productive of significant research. Free-standing institutions without full-time faculty and research facilities are incapable of doing this.

Conclusions

1. Programs which make a virtue of relating directly and immediately to the present job assignment of the degree candidate run several risks:

- a. Each of the projects or periods of study of various topics may be so closely related to a particular problem or task that the individual may only repeat with somewhat different emphasis whatever was first done.
- b. The focus on a particular problem in the candidate's own place of employment may so narrow his focus, reading, and thinking that no broad concepts or principles are assimilated or applied and no capacity for generalizing or theorizing is generated. Perhaps the doctorate should be an Ed.D. in solving a particular type of problem in an institution where presently employed. In brief, I fear tunnel vision. Only a few studies rose above it.

2. The free-standing institute pattern devoted to study in a single discipline or subphase thereof presents even more serious problems than the pattern of "Institution E" because:

- a. a. There is a danger of becoming cultish, if indeed that is not true at the beginning.
- b. The emphasis on personal development and individualizing of programs makes serious criticism of a candidate's work almost impossible so long as it is presented in readable form. One gets the impression that the most outrageous observations and generalizations are regarded as unusually creative, highly insightful, and uniquely and awfully personal.
- c. There is no assurance of continuing existence because these institutions may be only the length and breadth of an individual, and the financing is marginal. Two or three lean years in terms of admissions would destroy most of these institutions.
- d. There can be no assurance of maintenance of standards because these depend on the views and scholarly attributes of one or two people who may depart on very short notice.
- e. There is neither a strong permanent faculty nor a strong and knowledgeable board to maintain standards and to moderate the excesses and deficiencies of individual faculty members or administrators.

3. The use of student peers and generally of individuals without a doctorate on doctoral committees is indefensible. In most universities, junior faculty members do not serve on doctoral committees until they have published research beyond the doctoral dissertation. Students working on a degree are generally not sufficiently capable or unbiased to render a critical judgment of the work of a fellow student. Although there are various reasons put forth to support this pattern, I believe that concern for excellence should be the overriding consideration. It would be far more appropriate to ask two scholars of note who have had no prior experience

with the candidate to sit with the committee to review and approve the final project.

4. The time element is a major concern in all of these programs. There is an awareness on the part of those operating the programs that continuing pressure for completion of requirements is desirable. Various pressures are applied:

- a. continuing payment of tuition every term until the degree is granted:
- b. reminders of due dates, insistence on formal requests for extension:
- c. threats of dropping the student if progress is long deferred.

But this time factor also operates to negate quality. At "Institution E" a project proposal must be approved before the student moves ahead with it. There have been delays in granting approval and extensive revision may still be required. A student can probably get an extension, but apparently would be obligated for additional tuition in some programs.

5. It becomes apparent to me that in nontraditional degree programs a process with specific student requirements, due dates, and feedback is essential. Likewise, accreditation procedures must include review of final and interim student reports to appraise the character and quality of programs. There is simply no other adequate evidence for appraisal.

6. The Ph.D. as a research degree is comprised by these free-standing nontraditional degree programs, but until and unless traditional universities move to clear up degree definitions and requirements, we have difficulty in bluntly asserting that nontraditional degrees, no matter how valuable the experience may be to individuals, are clearly not Ph.D.'s. Accrediting

associations must take a strong position on this matter and apply it in accreditation reviews of all graduate programs. They owe this to the traditional colleges and universities on whose continuing support accreditation depends. They also owe it to the public and prospective students who will inevitably view accreditation as confirming both general acceptability and equivalence to traditional campus-based degrees.

Major Concerns, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Nontraditional degrees are offered under various circumstances and by very different types of institutions.

1. A "traditional" university with extensive experience may offer graduate degrees through extension courses using its own faculty, or it may operate centers staffed by adjunct professors who teach courses developed, approved, and evaluated by the campus faculty. These two patterns provide the best situation for application and enforcement of campus degree standards. Even in this circumstance, the program may degenerate into accumulation of credits and a degree lacking cumulative impact and rigor because

- a. The atypical course schedules (elongated class sessions or evenings or weekends) are not conducive to concentration and depth in class nor to extensive out-of-class efforts by individuals who are employed full time:
- b. Either campus faculty members or adjunct faculty members may be unaware of how their courses are related to others taken by students and may not accept any responsibility for students or program other than appearing in class on the scheduled occasions:
- e. It is difficult to maintain any course sequences because maintenance of enrollments usually requires acceptance of "new" students to balance dropouts from previous terms.

2. An accredited college or university with limited or no experience in campus graduate programs generally lacks a faculty competent to enlarge graduate programs and offer them at a distance. Such programs may be initiated by administrators concerned with balancing the main campus budget. In such cases, control of the program is likely to remain in the hands of a few persons largely under central administrative control. Such a program is likely to be inadequate because

- a. Faculty controls are limited or nonexistent, and many of the faculty may be quite negative about the program:
- b. The administrator who founded and effectively runs the program is more concerned with income and personal recognition for innovation than for program quality and performance standards:
- c. The administrator is reluctant to add program features that increase quality and performance because of costs:
- d. Students in such programs are short changed in that they receive a degree that is less than the institution asserts it to be and that has little or no exchange value in the larger educational market.

Especially because of the administrative involvement, the regional accrediting associations (which have always been dominated by college and university administrators) find it difficult to deal rigorously and efficiently with such programs. Generally such programs should not be accredited, and an institution that insists on offering them should have its accreditation removed.

3. The offering of graduate degrees by a corporation or large research enterprise poses a problem distinctly different from those cited above.

The offering of the degree may be based on several motivations:

- the natural interest of many Ph.D. employees to participate in teaching;
- the desire of some employees to attain an advanced degree;

- the interest of the administration in developing a type of degree program especially appropriate to staff requirements;
- the interest of the administration in providing a staff development program for its research personnel;
- the administrative belief that an "in-house" graduate program will prevent diversion of time and energy of students and research staff to studies carried on at traditional colleges and universities;
- a belief that practical or applied research is advanced by a composite program of scholarly study and of "pure" research.

Such programs can be excellent because of the quality of the research personnel, the availability of technical resources and research equipment, the high level of motivation of the students, and the close interrelation of study and the work of both professors and students. There are several possible areas of weakness:

- a. In the pressure to relate instruction and dissertations to the concerns of the organization, the program may be unduly narrow in scope:
- b. For the same basic reasons, academic freedom may be restricted:
- c. The "faculty" may not have the necessary qualifications, and the students may not be carefully selected:
- d. The policies and standards of the program may be subject to intervention by the administration of the supporting organization (that is, the educational branch of the organization may lack autonomy):
- e. Any substantial change in relation between work assignments and time allocations for students study or faculty teaching and salaries could have disruptive impact on the program:
- f. The educational program could be abruptly terminated because of an abrupt change in the administrative views of the controlling organization.

4. Degree-granting programs offered within an essentially non-educational enterprise can be of excellent character, but they pose difficult problems for regional accrediting associations, which have limited resources for continuous monitoring as well as recurrent review. Administration, faculty participation in governance, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy (to name only a few vital items) are likely to be quite different in such an enterprise than they are on a typical campus. If such programs become numerous, they could pose a threat for the entire accreditation enterprise. Perhaps the best advice of the moment is that business or research enterprises seeking to develop graduate degree programs should be encouraged to do so in collaboration with a nearby university of recognized status in graduate work and research.

5. Some of the nontraditional graduate degree programs arise out of dissatisfaction with current emphases and tenets of graduate research programs as found in traditional institutions. In psychology this has happened when scholars holding a strongly humanistic view have become alienated from behaviorist-oriented departments. Such enterprises may be headed by one or more persons of outstanding reputation, and they may employ many of the traditional practices, course and credit requirements, examinations, and dissertations, but they may still be lacking in rigor because of

- a heavy emphasis on flexibility and individualistic program planning and greater concern for personal development than for rigorous research;
- a tendency toward an action rather than a research focus;

- a narrow rather than a balanced view of the nature of a discipline and a doctrinaire view as to the purpose of graduate study.

Such programs tend to be dominated by one or a few persons, to be somewhat cultish in nature, to have an uncertain future, and to attract students who are themselves activist oriented and hence negative toward traditional graduate programs. Degree recipients may find that, despite the eminence of some of their mentors, the degree program is less soundly based and less acceptable to traditional institutions than they hoped or had been led to believe. On the other hand, these programs may yield excellent experiences for some persons. The programs probably should use a practitioner degree designation. Because their continued existence is always in doubt, because they depend on one or a few persons for their continued existence, and because they lack the central controls exerted on departments that are imbedded in such programs in a university, attempts to accredit them are complicated by the amount of effort required relative to the size and significance of the program. Instigators of such programs should be advised to seek affiliation with a traditional institution or expect to operate without regional accreditation.

6. Free-standing institutions that use the designation of university and offer nontraditional graduate degrees based almost entirely upon submission of a research project or dissertation present the most difficult accreditation problem because

- a. The administrative staff usually has limited experience with graduate education and no conception of or commitment to graduate instruction and research:

- b. These programs depend upon finding adjunct faculty members sympathetic to the program and whose own experience may be limited and whose standards may be questionable:
- c. There are no full-time faculty members (whose reputations are at stake) to define procedures and monitor standards:
- d. The admissions policies are unspecific and likely to be tainted by financial concerns.

Accreditation of such programs can proceed only evaluating the final products (dissertations) presented by students, but the lack of a permanent faculty raises doubts as to whether standards existing at a given moment will continue. Furthermore, the fees collected are generally completely out of proportion to the services rendered. Accreditation would seem to imply that degree recipients receive full value for their fees when, in fact, they are being vastly overcharged for the limited services rendered.

Some Further Comments and Recommendations

I am further concerned--and comments of many of the students contribute to this concern--that nontraditional or external degree programs ought to be offered by a limited number of institutions of experience and stature in graduate work under principles and policies generally agreed upon by the institutions. When an institution with limited experience in graduate work offers a graduate program over the entire country and uses adjunct faculty members who may also be inexperienced in graduate instruction, continuing doubts about program quality are inevitable. When such an institution offers graduate degrees in foreign countries, the program (especially if accredited in the U.S.A.) inevitably engenders doubts about the quality of all of graduate study in the United States.

One must also wonder about the motivations of those responsible for external degree programs. Typically, a private institution must raise funds beyond the payment by students in order to support its programs, and it is unlikely to take on any large number of break-even programs unless these have some benefits that will ultimately increase the support of the institution. The basic motivation of individuals providing quick, subquality graduate degrees must be financial gain, a disdain for traditional graduate programs, or both.

There is one other issue on my mind that developed out of analyzing nontraditional degree programs. One gets the impression that institutions and individuals have found that many people aspire to achieve some kind of degree with immediate practical significance. It is also true that many people aspire to some knowledge or capability not now possessed that will enhance their insights and judgments. The latter group should be more a focus of concern than the former. There are many in the former group, however, and if institutions set up programs with a reasonable guarantee that attendance and the payment of certain fees will result in a degree, there will be many takers. If the degree were designated by something other than the standard symbols, it is likely that the number of people desiring it would decrease. I believe that the attraction presently is that people seek a degree that has a fairly traditional meaning, but they wish to acquire it without expending the time and effort required for the traditional degree. Institutions that respond to this need are trying to assert that their degree is based upon a different set of considerations, that it takes into account practical experiences, and that the educational experience interacts with job

experience. Nevertheless, they insist on using traditional degree designations. I believe that they do this with full knowledge that the degrees are different in purpose and quality, but they know that individuals seek them because they may be accepted as equivalents. It seems to me that it would be far more ethical and responsible on the part of established educational institutions (contrasted with the new ones that are obviously developed to take care of a need and make a profit in so doing) if they defined programs in terms of a set of competencies and insisted that people demonstrate the attainment of the competency in order to acquire a certificate to this effect. Ultimately, the attainment of a number of competencies at specified levels might result in a degree or other designation. The education programs and the examinations used to attain the status of C.P.A. exemplify the latter approach. One could set up a number of courses or experiences at which people could work over a period of time and then let them take an examination to document the achievement of a level of performance. That in itself would have significance. When certifiable competencies in a specified number of areas had been developed, the totality could be recognized by the award of a bachelor's degree. For example, I think the M.B.A. on an external basis could be defined in this way. As it stands, it seems to me that most of these nontraditional degree programs are playing around with easy or quicker ways to get a degree, but that the result is only to cloud further the issue of what a particular degree means.

The following recommendations are addressed to review and accreditation requirements and attempt to make these more specific, thereby giving direction to review teams and providing, in some cases, standards for decisions on the accredit status of nontraditional degree programs. The entire matter of

graduate program review and accreditation for all graduate degrees is discussed in a separate paper.

1. In the materials that I have seen, there has been a dearth of adequate statistics on applications, admissions, etc. A nontraditional degree-granting institution that seeks accreditation should be required to maintain for each of its programs

- a. a complete record of all applications, including those rejected;
- b. a record of admissions and of the data taken into account in deciding to admit each individual;
- c. a record of enrollment and of voluntary withdrawals and administrative terminations;
- d. an indication of students admitted to degree candidacy and the criteria and judgments used;
- e. a record of degrees awarded and the time required to earn them.

In addition to this historical data, which should give a far clearer picture of just what population an institution is dealing with and what happens to the students accepted, each such institution should maintain not only the official transcript, but also a complete folder of all materials produced by the students along with any remarks, grades, or comments by the administrators or faculty. The latter records should be maintained for at least five years after the awarding of a degree.

2. Each nontraditional degree program should maintain in its main office a complete set of texts, lectures, syllabi, study guides, and bibliographies and an indication of where and by whom each of these was prepared and revised, and a record of any charges made to students for them.

3. Specific attention should be given in each nontraditional degree program to a mastery of scholarly skills and a demonstration of these prior to admission to candidacy and planning and approval of the dissertation. The nature of the skills and the means of assessment should be carefully defined.

4. In every nontraditional graduate degree program, students should be required to present some type of culminating effort. This may be a master's thesis, a demonstration with rationale and explanation, or a performance. In some cases, it might be a combination of several projects completed during the work on the degree program. To each of these should be appended an indication of the assessment made and the individuals involved in making it as well as their major criteria for the assessment. In each case this assessment should include a review by main campus faculty members who operate equivalent programs on campus or by one or more qualified external examiner recognized as well qualified in the field covered by the program.

5. The use of adjunct faculty raises a number of specific problems for which better procedures than are presently used are required. In the case of a free-standing nontraditional degree program, if the administrators themselves are not qualified scholars in the fields covered by the degrees, a minimal number of full-time faculty members should be employed to coordinate the program and make some contribution to it. If the program is sponsored by a traditional institution, at least one of the nontraditional degree programs should be offered on or near the campus so that full-time faculty from the campus can teach in this program and become the monitoring group for programs

offered at a distance. The following recommendations pertain specifically to adjunct appointments:

- a. Prior to drawing up contracts for adjunct faculty, the institution should either obtain approval from the affected institution to contact its faculty members and arrange for their teaching or insist that the individuals submit evidence of approval by an administrator at their institution.
- b. In making this approach to the institution, the nature of the program and the extent to which it may be in competition with programs offered on the campus should be made clear.
- c. Continuing employment of an adjunct faculty member for periods of a year or more should include some payment to the individual's home university for fringe benefits.
- d. The nontraditional degree institution should provide insurance to cover travel and other risks taken by people teaching in the program.
- e. The nontraditional degree institution should provide liability insurance to cover any situation in which a student might sue the faculty member because of grades or other dissatisfactions.
- f. If it is clear that the faculty member will be using his office, phone, or other home university facilities or services, then the nontraditional institution should make some payment to cover these.
- g. When nontraditional degree program adjunct faculty serve the program on a more or less continuous basis, some grants of a few hundred dollars should be available to these persons to support research activities or evaluation efforts which are directly related to the program.

6. Since most of the nontraditional degree programs are clearly not the typical research M.A., M.S., or Ph.D., the degree awarded should be a practitioner degree. An appropriate degree should be used even if it means the creation of a new one. The Master of Education would be appropriate for many of the programs; a Master of Business (not the M.B.A.) would be appropriate for many others; or perhaps a Master of Social Science with some

parenthetical specification could be used. Some so-called master's degree programs are no more than an extension of a baccalaureate program because many of the students switch from one field to another, and the obvious lack of content and substance in the program is necessary to accommodate such shifts. For the doctor's degree in education-related programs, the Ed.D. should be used, and in the case of psychology-oriented programs, the Doctor of Psychology might be appropriate. A Doctor of Social Science degree could be appropriately used in some cases, but the Ph.D. and the traditional M.A. and M.S. should not be accredited in a nontraditional degree-granting institution unless it employs a few research-oriented faculty members, requires the mastery of research skills on the part of the students, and produces dissertations of significant research quality.

7. Every nontraditional degree program should be required to give in detail a report of its income and expenditures from and to all sources; and specifically it should indicate the difference in actual costs of serving a student and the amount of fees collected from the student. This "profit" should be indicated and its disposition covered by a set of principles consistent with the educational commitments of the degree-granting institution.

ROSTER OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

April 1, 1977

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CAMPUS-FREE COLLEGE (Candidate)
Administrative Coordinator: Mark Cheren
Contact Person: Sue Sinnamon
1239 G Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20005

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE (Accredited)
President: James W. Hall
Saratoga Springs, New York 12866

ICS CENTER FOR DEGREE STUDIES (Accredited)
Director: Charles E. Miller
Contact Person: Robert Donovan, Vice President, Education
Scranton, Pennsylvania 18515

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT (Accredited)
President: Albert W. Brown
Contact Person: Peter N. Smits, Assistant to the President
Brockport, New York 14420

THOMAS A. EDISON COLLEGE (Accredited)
President: James D. Brown, Jr.
Contact Person: Dennis Smith, Dir. of Institutional Research
Trenton, New Jersey 08638

UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK -
REGENTS EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAM (Accredited)
Director: Donald J. Nolan
Albany, New York 12230

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.

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Contact Person: Ken Rogers
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(New England Association - continued)

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(VICI)

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Commission on Vocational, Technical, Career Institutions

WASHINGTON COUNTY VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL INSTITUTE (Accredited)

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(North Central Association - continued)

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(Western Association - continued)

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FIELDING INSTITUTE (Applying)
President: Frederic Hudson
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GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY (Accredited)
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536 Mission Street
San Francisco, California 94105

HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY INSTITUTE (Applying)
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San Francisco, California 94103

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Redlands, California 92373

LA VERNE COLLEGE (Accredited)
President: Armen Sarafian
La Verne, California 91750

RAND GRADUATE INSTITUTE (Accredited)
Director: Charles Wolf, Jr.
1700 Main Street
Santa Monica, California 80406

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ (Accredited)
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Contact Person: Eugene Cota-Robles, Acad. Vice Chancellor
Santa Cruz, California 95064

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC (Accredited)
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(Western Association - continued)

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WHITEHEAD COLLEGE

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Redlands, California 92373

WORLD COLLEGE WEST (Candidate)

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San Rafael, California 94902

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President: Nevitt Sanford

Contact Person: Marvin Freedman, Dean,

School of Social-Clinical Psychology

2728 Durant Avenue

Berkeley, California 94704

Nontraditional programs within institutions

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President: Donald Gerth

Contact Person: Emory H. Holmes

Dominguez Hills, California 90747

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO (Accredited)

Chancellor: William B. McElroy

Contact Person: Martin M. Chamberlain, Dean, Univ. Extension
La Jolla, California 92093

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

BARSTOW COLLEGE (Accredited)

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2700 Barstow Road

Barstow, California 92311

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President: Donald R. Smothers

635 Donohoe Street

East Palo Alto, California 94303

APPENDIX B

1. Letter Sent to Degree Recipients.
2. Questionnaire Sent to Degree Recipients.

(1. Letter Sent to
Degree Recipient)

THE COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY ACCREDITATION

Under the auspices of the Council on Postsecondary Education and with the assistance of a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, I am directing a project in which we are reviewing the various external degree programs which are offered in the United States. As one phase of this, we are asking individuals who have earned doctoral degrees from external degree granting institutions to share with us their reactions, experiences, and possible concerns. According to the information provided us by (name of institution) you were awarded the (degree) in (field) by your institution. Officials at your institution know that we are engaged in this study and have provided the list of graduates with the understanding that we will be contacting a sample of them to obtain information for our analysis and report.

I and my associates would greatly appreciate it if you would take the time to answer the questions on the inserted page and then fold and return it in the enclosed stamped return envelope. We have asked for an identification on the questionnaire form only because we anticipate that in some cases the responses would raise issues of such significance that we might wish to write or call the individual. Other than this, the results will be summarized and reported without any identification and the questionnaires will be destroyed thereafter.

Finally, I should say that we have chosen a question form which requires that you write out the response rather than check something which we have provided. We decided to do this because it seemed evident, as we reviewed the background of degree recipients, that each involved significant and different factors which could not be adequately dealt with in a standard format. If the space provided for your answers is inadequate, please feel free to use the back of the page or provide additional pages as you wish. You can be assured that we will read with care what you send to us. Thanks very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Grover J. Andrews
Project Director

(2. Questionnaire Sent
TO Degree Recipients)

THE COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY ACCREDITATION

(Name of Institution) _____

Name of recipient _____

1. Comment on the attitudes (acceptance, rejection, indifference) of your professional associates toward the degree.
2. What professional advancement have you received since acquiring the degree: major salary increase, increased responsibility in same job, promotion, new position in a different institution?
3. Has the degree been worth the time, costs, and effort required to attain it?
4. How does this degree compare in its rigor and relevance in your work with degrees of traditional pattern held by your associates or co-workers?
5. What program suggestions have you for improving the quality and acceptance of the degree?
6. We would appreciate any other comments you care to make.

Study of Nontraditional Education - Grover J. Andrews, Director
795 Peachtree Street, N. E., Atlanta, Georgia 30308 - (404) 875-8011

Report No. 8

ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY ON ACCREDITATION
AND NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATION

By John Harris and Grover J. Andrews

ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY ON ACCREDITATION AND NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Introduction

Early in the implementation of the COPA project, the staff considered the development of an instrument to gather information and sample opinions from representatives of the various groups involved in American postsecondary education with special attention to be given to the evaluation and accreditation of nontraditional education. It was the decision of the project staff that such a survey would be useful but that the the design and implementation of such an instrument should come near the conclusion of the project. This would enable the survey to address the issues and concerns that emerged from the research findings of the project.

After twelve months of review and research the survey instrument was developed to gather information and opinions from a nationally representative group based on what appeared to be the critical issues: What is nontraditional education? What should be the role of nontraditional education in post-secondary education and in accreditation?

The instrument evolved from the project staff, was refined by the Office of Institutional Research at Georgia State University, and was field tested by twelve representatives from six institutions in the Atlanta, Georgia, area. These representatives included college presidents, accrediting commission members, and visiting team members. The instrument was refined

further based on the field test and then mailed nationwide to the various target groups.

The instrument contains four parts designed to gather information and opinions concerning (1) the work of visiting teams and accrediting commissions, (2) general information and definition of nontraditional education, (3) opinions of institutional administrators on the establishment and use of nontraditional education, and (4) the accreditation of nontraditional education.

From the 3,315 instruments mailed, more than 1,700 responses were received. However, only 1,319, or 39.7 percent, were used in the tabulation. Some 200 were not used because of technical deficiencies (unanswered parts, etc.), and another 200 were received too late to be included in the tabulation.

To test the validity of the national scope of the 1,319 responses used, the percentage of the responses received and tabulated from each of the six regional accrediting associations was compared to the percentage of the accredited institutions (nationally) that are accredited by each regional. The variance was no more than 5 percent. It was concluded that the response was a balanced representation and that no one region of the country dominated the results.

A technical explanation of the data follows, and the report concludes with copies of (1) the letter of invitation, (2) the questionnaire, and (3) the tabulated results.

A Technical Explanation

This report is written as a brief technical introduction to the tabulated questionnaire that follows. Interpretations of the data contained in the tabulated questionnaire are also interspersed in the Summary Report of the project. There is a great deal of information about the accrediting community's perspectives on accreditation of nontraditional higher education within the responses to this questionnaire. The tabulated questionnaire, however, shows only the aggregate responses. That is, tabulations are not shown for each classification group, such as Commission Members, Institutional Representatives, etc. A great deal could be learned by comparing the typical responses of different groups on certain questions. An even finer grained analysis that would be helpful would be a comparison of how the respondents that chose a certain option in a given question responded on another item. Perhaps the data can be analyzed more extensively by future researchers.

Classification Codes

The questionnaire was sent to the following eleven groups:

- Commission Members--individuals serving on the Commissions of the regional associations at the time decisions were made on the institution to include in the study.
- Institutional Representatives--individuals holding key administrative or faculty positions in the nontraditional programs of the institutions included in the study.
- Presidents--the chief executive officers of the institutions included in the study.

- Presidents on Visiting Teams--presidents of institutions in the study who served on accreditation teams that visited one of the institutions included in the study.
- Presidents on Commissions--presidents of institutions in the study who were serving as a member of an accreditation commission at the time a decision was made on a nontraditional institution or program.
- Commission Members on Visiting Teams--members of accreditation commissions who served on accreditation teams that visited one of the institutions included in the study.
- Other Accrediting Agencies--officers of COPA-recognized accrediting agencies other than regional associations.
- Commission Staffs--members of the regional accrediting staffs for postsecondary education.
- State Higher Education Boards--chief executive officers of state higher education organizations.
- COPA Staff and Board--members of the executive staff and board of directors of COPA.
- Other Presidents--chief executive officers of regionally accredited postsecondary institutions in the United States.

Select and Rank Items

In items 9-16 and 20 the respondents were asked to select the options they believed to be appropriate and then rank their selections. A rank of "1" was the greatest value. For example, in item 9 the respondent was asked first to select statements that "best represent" the meaning of "nontraditional higher education." If the respondent selected options b, c, e, and g, these four selections were then to be ranked. A rank of "1" assigned to "b" means that the statement "External degrees granted on the basis of examined achievement without required periods of study or residency" best represents the meaning of nontraditional higher education to this respondent.

On the tabulated questionnaire, two columns of numbers are shown to the left of each option in the items 9-16 and 20. One column is headed "WMRV," which means "Weighted Mean Ranked Value." The other is "R" meaning "Rank." As shown in the example above, a respondent was to rank only selected options, not all of them. Consequently, aggregate rankings could not be established by computing simply the average rank for each option. If an option "a" was selected by 200 respondents and had an average ranking of 2.5 while option "b" was selected by 300 with an average ranking of 2.5, the average rankings should be weighted to give "b" a higher average ranking than "a" because more respondents selected it.

Therefore, the "mean rank value" of each option was computed; that is, the sum of all the ranks assigned to an option was divided by the number of assigned ranks--average or mean rank value. This mean rank value was then weighted by multiplying it by the reciprocal of the fraction of respondents who selected that option out of the total number of respondents who dealt with the item at all. Because some respondents apparently skipped complete items, the fraction for each option was computed by dividing the number selecting a given option by the largest number that selected any option in that item. In item 9, for example, 307 respondents selected option "c." Therefore, 307 becomes the divisor for calculating the other options, also.

As it turns out, option "c" has the highest WMRV in item 9. Following is a step-by-step computation of the WMRV of this option. First, option "c" was selected and ranked as follows:

<u>Rank (R)</u>	<u>Number (N)</u>	<u>R x N</u>
1	259	259
2	307	614
3	215	645
4	122	488
5	72	360
6	27	162
7	16	112
	<u>1,018</u>	<u>2,640</u>

The mean ranked value (MRV) would, therefore, be $MRV = \frac{RN (2,640)}{N (1,018)} = 2.59$.

The MRV of 2.59 would be weighted by the reciprocal of the fraction of respondents who dealt at all with item 9 and who chose option "c." It happens that 1,018 selected option "c," which was the largest number to select any option. Because the largest number selecting any option becomes the denominator to compute the fraction for weighting the MRV, $\left(\frac{1,018 \text{ Selection of option "c"}}{1,018 \text{ Lowest number item 9}} \right)$, the reciprocal would be 1. Therefore, option "c" retains the full MRV, i.e., $MRV \times \text{Reciprocal} = 2.6 \times 1 = 2.6$.

In the case of option "a" of item 9, only 859 respondents selected option "a." Therefore, its MRV of 3.6 is lowered by multiplying it by 1.19, the reciprocal of $\frac{859}{1,018}$, i.e., $MRV \times \text{Reciprocal} = 3.6 \times 1.2 = 4.3$. The reciprocal was chosen because the higher the number of a rank the less its value. Therefore, an option selected by fewer people, all other matters being the same, should receive a rank of less value, or one closer to 7 than to 1.

Once the WMRV's were computed, aggregate ranks (R) were assigned to each option in items 9-16 and 20. Therefore, the column R indicates the aggregate rank of each option based upon its respective WMRV.

Ranked Items

In questionnaire items 4-7, the respondents were expected to rank all of the options in each item. Therefore, the mean rank values (MRV) were computed as shown above in the section on Select and Rank Items without the use of the reciprocal fraction weight. That is, the MRV of 3.0 of option "a" in item 4 was computed by dividing the sum of all its rankings by the total number of respondents to item 4. Because the respondents were asked to rank all the available options, responses were discarded if all options were not ranked. As a result, the number of persons ranking each option within these items was equal, and no weighting for different numbers of responses to each item was necessary. Aggregate ranks (R) were assigned to the options within items 4-7, based on the MRV's.

Other Items

The tabulations of the remaining items should be clear from reading what the respondent is asked to do in each one. In items 20-33 and 36, for example, respondents were asked to indicate their relative agreement/disagreement with a given statement. The numbers to the left of each option indicate how many respondents expressed a given level of agreement or disagreement.

Other Points

There are sections to the questionnaire. Items 1 and 2 ask the respondents to indicate how they are currently employed and to give the primary perspective from which they are responding to the questionnaire. In contrast, it should be noted that the COPA Classification Codes were assigned to the respondents by the project staff. These Classification Codes were derived from the various lists obtained from COPA for mailing the questionnaires.

Items 3-8 deal with "Information Concerning the Work of Visiting Teams and Accrediting Commissions" in relation to nontraditional higher education. Items 9-17 focus on nontraditional higher education without direct regard for accreditation implications--"Information on Nontraditional Higher Education."

Items 18-35 were designed to be answered only by institutional administrators--"Administrators' Opinions Concerning the Establishment and Utilization of Nontraditional Education." Item 36 was "For Accreditation Commission Members Only."

Respondents were given an opportunity to make "Other Comments" on the last page of the questionnaire. Several of these comments were used in the Summary Report.



The Council On Postsecondary Accreditation

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Study of Nontraditional
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To: Chief Executive Officer

The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) and the six regional accrediting associations are conducting a national study of nontraditional education. The project is being partially supported by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Enclosed is a brief description of the project which is scheduled for completion by September 30, 1978.

As a part of the research for the project we feel it is important to sample the opinion of chief administrators and other educational personnel in postsecondary education about nontraditional education and accreditation.

Enclosed is a brief questionnaire that we invite you to respond to and return to us at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Grover J. Andrews
Project Director

Enclosures



The Council On Postsecondary Accreditation

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PROJECT TO DEVELOP EVALUATIVE CRITERIA FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

This study deals specifically with the accreditation of nontraditional education as it currently exists in postsecondary education within the United States.

The term "nontraditional" is an ambiguous term that has come to mean many different things to different groups, institutions and individuals. For the purposes of the COPA Project we have used the term "nontraditional" generically to apply to a wide range of educational programs that are perceived by certain institutions and individuals as "nontraditional." This utilization of the term "nontraditional" has included external degrees, independent study programs, competency-based education, modular curriculum designs, multi-media instruction, learning contracts, military base education, contracting with other institutions, agencies or organizations by institutions for the delivery of education, and experiential learning.

A goal of this survey and of the study in general is to identify more clearly the meaning of the term "nontraditional education." Some of the questions in this survey have been designed to assist in the achievement of this goal.

The specific goals of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the essential elements that should be present in the various types of non-traditional study programs that lead to some form of formal credential for certification of a degree, such as a certificate, associate, baccalaureate, masters and doctorate;
2. To develop a classification of the types of nontraditional study programs;
3. To develop appropriate guidelines, criteria and evaluation procedures for nontraditional educational programs and institutions for use by accrediting commissions and institutions; and
4. Propose policy to be presented to the COPA Board for consideration and adoption to
(a. facilitate a more uniform approach by the accrediting commissions in the evaluation of non-traditional educational programs and (b. to assist in the development of nontraditional educational programs.

The survey is designed in four sections to gather specific opinions and information from chief administrators and other educational personnel in postsecondary education concerning nontraditional education and the accreditation of nontraditional education. By answering this questionnaire you will make a significant contribution to the COPA Project to Develop Evaluative Criteria for the Accreditation of Nontraditional Education. We are interested in your opinion even though your institution may not be directly involved in nontraditional education.

Section I is designed to gather information on the work of the visiting teams sent to review nontraditional education by accrediting commissions and the action taken by the accrediting commissions. Section II is designed to gather specific information concerning nontraditional education. Section III is designed to gather opinions of administrators and other educational personnel concerning the establishment and utilization of nontraditional education. Section IV is designed to gather specific information from accrediting commission members concerning their experience in accreditation decisions concerning nontraditional education.

There are 36 questions in the survey. Please complete the sections of the questionnaire that apply to you and return to the COPA Project Office in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible.

Return to: COPA Project
5th Floor
795 Peachtree Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30308

Thank you.

Grover J. Andrews
Project Director

To Develop Evaluative Criteria and Procedures for the
Accreditation of Nontraditional Education

The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) has received a \$95,000 grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan in support of a project To Develop Evaluative Criteria and Procedures for the Accreditation of Nontraditional Educational Programs.

The 16-month project will study nontraditional education and emerging learning forms in postsecondary educational institutions in order to determine the essential elements and appropriate evaluative criteria for accreditation purposes. It is expected that the study will produce new policy and procedures to be considered for adoption by COPA and the regional accrediting commissions that would facilitate uniform approaches in the accreditation of non-traditional programs, institutions, and delivery systems.

A classification of the types of nontraditional educational programs will be a phase of the project.

Director of the project is Dr. Grover J. Andrews, Associate Executive Secretary of the Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Dr. Andrews will devote half-time to the study. He has worked extensively in the evaluation and accreditation of nontraditional educational programs and institutions in the Southern region. He directed the study which led to the development and adoption of the Southern Association's Standard Nine, which was the first accrediting commission standard to deal with nontraditional education.

Also serving on the project staff are Dr. Kay J. Andersen, Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and Dr. Patricia Thrash, Associate Director--Evanston, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Researchers for the project are Dr. Paul Dressel, Professor of Research, Michigan State University, and Dr. John Harris, Professor, Department of Education, Middle Tennessee State University.

Hundreds of institutions have developed nontraditional educational programs in recent years. These include external degrees, competency-based education, modular curriculum designs, multi-media instruction, military base education, learning contracts, and experiential learning. In addition, a number of nontraditional degree programs have been sponsored by other than colleges and universities; for example, the New York Regents Proficiency Examination Program and the Community College of the Air Force.

A number of the accrediting commissions have adapted existing evaluative criteria and processes to accommodate the nontraditional programs and institutions. Some have developed new procedures. All have worked from the interim guidelines on Accreditation and Nontraditional Study, developed by the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE), a predecessor organization to COPA.

These guidelines have been helpful as a beginning but now there is a need to provide better guidance to the institutions and accrediting commissions with specific criteria and procedures for the evaluation of nontraditional education.

The project will be conducted in three phases:

Phase I --Status study of a representative group of existing nontraditional educational programs and institutions including survey of institutions, graduates, and accrediting personnel.

Phase II --Development of essential elements to be present in the various types and degree levels of nontraditional education.

Phase III --Development of criteria and guidelines for evaluation and accreditation.

A possible follow up to the project will be in evaluation of the effectiveness of the criteria in practice and the development of training programs for commission members and visiting committee members.

The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation is a national, nonprofit organization. Its major purpose is to support, coordinate, and improve all nongovernmental accrediting activities conducted in the United States at the postsecondary educational level.

The project is being administered from the Office of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 795 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, Georgia, 30308.

The project began on April 1, 1977 and is expected to be concluded by September 30, 1978.



The Council On Postsecondary Accreditation

Section I

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For Data
Processing
Use Only

(Please return the complete questionnaire with the above label in place)

1. You are currently employed as:

- ☐ a. Faculty member.
- ☐ b. President of a postsecondary institution.
- ☐ c. Chief educational officer of a postsecondary institution. (Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of Instruction, etc.)
- ☐ d. Chief executive of a state coordinating or governing board.
- ☐ e. Member of a private, higher education coordinating body.
- ☐ f. Professional staff member of an accrediting commission.

0 _____
1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____

2. In postsecondary voluntary accreditation one individual may serve several roles. For example, a college president may chair visiting committees and also sit on a commission of the accrediting association.

We therefore ask you to indicate below from which perspective or role you will primarily respond to this inventory of your opinions about the accreditation of nontraditional higher education. (Check only one.)

- ☐ a. Primarily as an institutional or program administrator.
- ☐ b. Primarily from serving on visiting committees.
- ☐ c. Primarily from serving on accrediting commissions.
- ☐ d. Primarily as a member of the staff of an accrediting commission.

7 _____

Information Concerning the Work of Visiting Teams and Accrediting Commissions

3. Indicate whether each of the statements below is "True" or "False" of your experience on or observation of visiting committees reviewing nontraditional institutions or programs.

True False

- ☐ ☐ a. The purpose of the visit was clear to the visiting team.
- ☐ ☐ b. The purpose of the visit was clear to the institution.
- ☐ ☐ c. The visiting committee was adequately oriented to the nature of the nontraditional institution or program prior to or at the beginning of the campus visit.
- ☐ ☐ d. The criteria for the evaluation of the institution or program were clear to the visiting committee.
- ☐ ☐ e. The criteria for the evaluation of the institution were clear to the institution's representatives.
- ☐ ☐ f. The accrediting commission's staff had provided appropriate assistance to the applying institution.
- ☐ ☐ g. The written reports prepared by the institution's staff were adequate.

8 _____
9 _____
10 _____
11 _____
12 _____
13 _____
14 _____

4. Rank each of the following general matters in terms of the concern they elicit from visiting committees about nontraditional programs and institutions. (Let "1" be the greatest cause for concern.)

_____ a. Institution's or program's purposes and goals.	15 _____
_____ b. Degree requirements.	16 _____
_____ c. Teaching	17 _____
_____ d. Faculty	18 _____
_____ e. Finance	19 _____
_____ f. Instructional resources.	20 _____
_____ g. Student services.	21 _____
_____ h. Facilities	22 _____
_____ i. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.	23 _____

5. Rank each of the following matters in terms of the greatest to least concern they elicit from visiting committees in regard to quality assurance. (The greatest concern should be ranked as "1".)

_____ a. The comparability of student achievement in the nontraditional program or institution with that of students in traditional programs or institutions.	24 _____
_____ b. The consistency of procedures used to evaluate student achievement with the nature and purpose of the nontraditional program or institution.	25 _____
_____ c. The general intellectual ability and interests of the typical student in a nontraditional program or institution.	26 _____
_____ d. The comparability of the degree expectations and requirements of the nontraditional program and institution with that of similar degrees in traditional institutions.	27 _____
_____ e. The provision of instruction, courses or degrees through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.	28 _____

6. In terms of faculty quality and circumstances in nontraditional higher education, rank each of the following from the greatest to least concern to visiting committees. (Rank "1" as the greatest concern.)

_____ a. Educational attainment.	29 _____
_____ b. Relevant experience.	30 _____
_____ c. Evidence of related research or scholarship.	31 _____
_____ d. Use of adjunct, part-time faculty.	32 _____
_____ e. Independence of faculty judgments on educational attainment of students from managerial concerns.	33 _____
_____ f. Work settings conducive to teaching and scholarship.	34 _____
_____ g. Academic leadership.	35 _____

7. With regard to the awarding of credit for prior achievement, rank the items below which arouse the greatest concerns for visiting committee(s) (with "1" being the cause for greatest concern).

_____ a. Credit for military courses.

36 _____

_____ b. Credit for performance on CLEP or other standardized achievement tests.

37 _____

_____ c. Credit for performance on examinations developed by the institution.

38 _____

_____ d. Credit for on-the-job or life experience learning.

39 _____

8. Based on your experience or observations of accrediting commission actions on non-traditional education (institutions and programs) how would you describe the commission decision? Please select only one.

_____ a. Fair

40 _____

_____ b. Questionable

41 _____

_____ c. Unfair

42 _____

Information on Nontraditional Education

9. The term "nontraditional higher education" has many meanings. Select and rank those statements that best represent nontraditional higher education to you.

- _____ a. Competency based curricula within conventional institutions. 43 _____
- _____ b. External degrees granted on the basis of examined achievement without required periods of study or residency. 44 _____
- _____ c. External degree programs offering off-campus, independent study through instructional systems, programs, and materials designed for home study. 45 _____
- _____ d. Off-campus, conventional instruction such as military base programs often using part-time and adjunct faculty. 46 _____
- _____ e. Contract degree programs, individualized not only in terms of instructional means but also in outcomes and achievements expected of graduates. 47 _____
- _____ f. Educational brokering efforts that offer no instruction or credit but which link learner interests and needs to educational resources such as instruction, assessment of prior learning, and counseling. 48 _____
- _____ g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency. 49 _____

10. From the following select and rank those options which hold the most promise for sustaining or improving the quality of American higher education.

- _____ a. Competency based curricula within conventional institutions. 50 _____
- _____ b. External degrees granted on the basis of examined achievement without required periods of study or residency. 51 _____
- _____ c. External degree programs offering off-campus, independent study through instructional systems, programs, and materials designed for home study. 52 _____
- _____ d. Off-campus, conventional institutions such as military base programs often using part-time and adjunct faculty. 53 _____
- _____ e. Contract degree programs, individualized not only in terms of instructional means but also in outcomes and achievements expected of graduates. 54 _____
- _____ f. Educational brokering efforts that offer no instruction or credit but which link learner interests and needs to educational resources such as instruction, assessment of prior learning, and counseling. 55 _____
- _____ g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency. 56 _____

11. From the following select and rank those options which hold the most promise for improving access to groups perceived not to have had adequate access to American higher education.

- _____ a. Competency based curricula within conventional institutions. 57 _____
- _____ b. External degrees granted on the basis of examined achievement without regard to required periods of study or residency. 58 _____
- _____ c. External degree programs offering off-campus, independent study through instructional systems, programs, and materials designed for home study. 59 _____
- _____ d. Off-campus, conventional instruction such as military base programs often using part-time and adjunct faculty. 60 _____
- _____ e. Contract degree programs, individualized not only in terms of instructional means but also in outcomes and achievements expected of graduates. 61 _____
- _____ f. Educational brokering efforts that offer no instruction or credit but which link learner interests and needs to educational resources such as instruction, assessment of prior learning, and counseling. 62 _____
- _____ g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency. 63 _____

12. Nontraditional higher education programs are offered in a variety of circumstances. Of those listed below, select and rank those most likely to threaten the quality of American higher education.

- _____ a. Special nontraditional program(s) of a conventional institution. 64 _____
- _____ b. Conversion of an entire conventional curriculum to a new form, i.e., traditional liberal arts program changed to a competency based program. 65 _____
- _____ c. Special institutions created by a state system of higher education to offer external degrees. 66 _____
- _____ d. Institution or agency created by Federal Government to award credit or to instruct. 67 _____
- _____ e. Institution or agency created by a private corporate body to award credit or to instruct. 68 _____
- _____ f. A private, not-for-profit or for-profit, free-standing institution established for the sole purpose of offering unconventional degree programs. 69 _____
- _____ g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency. 70 _____

13. With regard to quality assurance, select and rank those items below which are of most concern to you.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| _____ a. Special nontraditional program(s) of a conventional institution. | 71 _____ |
| _____ b. Conversion of an entire conventional curriculum to a new form, e. g., traditional liberal arts program changed to a competency based program. | 72 _____ |
| _____ c. Special institutions created by a state system of higher education to offer external degrees. | 73 _____ |
| _____ d. Institution or agency created by Federal Government to award credit or to instruct. | 74 _____ |
| _____ e. Institution created by a private corporate body to award credit or to instruct. | 75 _____ |
| _____ f. A private, not-for-profit or for-profit, free-standing institution established for the primary purpose of offering unconventional degree programs. | 76 _____ |
| _____ g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency. | 77 _____ |

14. Many established as well as recently developed programs and institutions are employing a variety of nontraditional practices which deviate from typical academic conventions. Select and rank those deviations listed below which will most affect basic policies and practices of institutional, regional accreditation.

- | | |
|--|----------|
| _____ a. Significant majority of the teaching staff are adjunct appointees. | 78 _____ |
| _____ b. Little or no residency requirements for degree candidates. | 79 _____ |
| _____ c. Centers for instruction far removed from campuses. | 80 _____ |
| _____ d. Individualized or self-paced instruction. | 81 _____ |
| _____ e. Individualized degree expectations or requirements usually formulated by contracts. | 82 _____ |
| _____ f. Heavy reliance on multi-media instruction for remote, independent study. | 83 _____ |
| _____ g. Stating degree requirements in terms of achievements rather than time or credit hours. | 84 _____ |
| _____ h. Emphasis on part-time older students. | 85 _____ |
| _____ i. Awarding credit for prior and experiential learning. | 86 _____ |
| _____ j. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution, or an unaccredited organization or agency. | 87 _____ |

15. Select and rank those basic changes you think accreditation must make to deal fairly and effectively with the deviations identified in the question 14 above.

- _____ a. Focus more on educational results and less on structure and process. 88 _____
- _____ b. Become more concerned about assuring reasonable comparability in degree programs among institutions--that is, assure that given degrees in given fields have some common meaning in terms of student achievements when offered at different institutions. 89 _____
- _____ c. Use special evaluators to examine in depth the institution's provisions for quality assurance in addition to visiting teams. 90 _____
- _____ d. Refuse to deal with some curricular and institutional deviations as too extreme to be recognized by an accrediting association. 91 _____
- _____ e. Re-emphasize program accreditation in contrast to institutional-wide accreditation. 92 _____
- _____ f. Find direct ways to examine student performances and products. 93 _____
- _____ g. Achieve a consensus on basic principles or standards which should characterize institutional structures and processes 94 _____

16. Select and rank those functions of voluntary, regional, institutional accreditation you identify as critical.

- _____ a. Promote institutional integrity and improvement. 95 _____
- _____ b. Maintain the independence of the academy; protect academic freedom. 96 _____
- _____ c. Protect the historic prerogatives of faculty in curricular and instructional matters. 97 _____
- _____ d. Protect the investments of established institutions from the incursion of new ones in reach of markets. 98 _____
- _____ e. Assure that respective degrees represent certain minimal attainments. 99 _____
- _____ f. Protect the "consumer interests" of students and the general public. 100 _____
- _____ g. Help to improve the image of higher education to the general public. 101 _____
- _____ h. Be an advocate for institutions to their sponsors whether religious, private non-religious, or municipal, state, and federal governments. 102 _____
- _____ i. Encourage sound innovative and imaginative approaches to producing quality instruction by accredited institutions. 103 _____

17. What do you think the response of traditional institutions will be as they face the decline of the 18-24 year old population in the 1980's and the emergence of non-traditional higher education, particularly that part focused on older part-time students?
(Select as many as you think appropriate.)

☐ a. Develop more non-residential programs themselves.	104 _____
☐ b. Recognize more experiential programs themselves.	105 _____
☐ c. Move to stated degree requirements in terms of student performances and products.	106 _____
☐ d. Make greater use of multi-media instructional procedures for independent remote study.	107 _____
☐ e. Use adjunct, temporary faculty more often.	108 _____
☐ f. Reassert the value of traditional, full-time, campus-based study.	109 _____
☐ g. Reassert selective admissions standards.	110 _____
☐ h. Assure quality through exit graduation standards rather than admission standards.	111 _____
☐ i. Offer more non-credit, continuing education programs.	112 _____

Administrators' Opinions Concerning the Establishment
And Utilization of Nontraditional EducationFor Institutional Administrators Only.

18. Does your institution offer nontraditional programs?

☐ Yes☐ No

113 _____

If yes, what percentage of your institution's total educational effort is nontraditional?

☐ About 10 percent☐ About 25 percent☐ About 50 percent☐ About 75 percent☐ One hundred percent

114 _____

19. Do you have any plans to develop and offer nontraditional programs within the next two years?

☐ Yes☐ No

115 _____

20. From the following select and rank the factors which had the most effect on the establishment of a nontraditional program in your institution:

☐ a. Student requests.

116 _____

☐ b. Declining traditional enrollments.

117 _____

☐ c. Institutional financial problems.

118 _____

☐ d. Educational dream of a top administrator.

119 _____

☐ e. Basic interest in curricular reform.

120 _____

☐ f. Meeting competition from other institutions.

121 _____

☐ g. Stimulus from legislative or state-wide coordinating/governing boards.

122 _____

☐ h. Accreditation standards, policies and procedures that allow recognition.

123 _____

☐ i. Needs of the community (business, industry, etc.)

124 _____

Indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

21. In general the concept of nontraditional higher education is sound.

☐ Strongly agree☐ Agree☐ Slightly agree☐ Slightly disagree☐ Disagree☐ Strongly disagree

125 _____

22. A nontraditional degree program is a logical option within the philosophy and structure of my institution.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

126 _____

23. The establishment of totally new institutions is the most viable alternative for the delivery of nontraditional forms of postsecondary education.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

127 _____

24. Most nontraditional degrees are comparable in quality to traditional degrees.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

128 _____

25. Nontraditional higher education is appealing for economic reasons (i.e., it is less expensive for an institution to deliver).

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

129 _____

26. College and university faculties generally support the concept of nontraditional higher education.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

130 _____

27. Nontraditional programs and institutions are treated fairly by accreditation.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

131 _____

28. Nontraditional higher education presents a basic problem to the accrediting community.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

132 _____

29. A new, national accrediting agency should be created for nontraditional institutions.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

133 _____

30. Graduates of nontraditional programs and institutions are treated equally with graduates with similar degrees from traditional programs and institutions.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

134 _____

31. Nontraditional higher education is a fad which will run a cycle of popularity and then fade into relative obscurity.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

135 _____

32. Institutions accredited by one regional association should not be allowed to offer credit courses and degree programs in another region without the regional association of the area in which the program is to be offered approving the program.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

136 _____

33. More nontraditional programs will be focused on older, part-time students in the 1980's than there are now.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

137 _____

34. Students generally support the concept of a nontraditional higher education.

18-24 year old students.

☐ Yes

138 _____

☐ No

Older students.

☐ Yes

139 _____

☐ No

Part-time students.

☐ Yes

140 _____

☐ No

35. Which of the following groups, in your opinion, is most resistant to establishing a nontraditional degree within an institution?

☐ Students

141 _____

☐ Faculty

142 _____

☐ General Academic Administrators

143 _____

☐ Graduate School Officials

144 _____

☐ Registrars

145 _____

☐ Presidents

146 _____

Accreditation of Nontraditional Education

For Accreditation Commission Members Only.

(Indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

36. As a member of an Accrediting Commission in reviewing nontraditional institutions and nontraditional programs of accredited institutions, what has been your experience with those reviews and what are your perceptions of the accreditation process related to nontraditional higher education?

- a. The Commission was adequately informed of the nontraditional nature of the institutions or programs under consideration.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

147 _____

- b. The established policies, standards, and procedures of the Commission on which I serve were adequate to deal fairly and effectively with the non-traditional institutions and programs that have been considered by my Commission.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

148 _____

- c. In my judgment, the accreditation of nontraditional institutions or programs poses major problems for accrediting commissions.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Slightly agree
☐ Slightly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

149 _____

Other Comments

If you have other comments concerning nontraditional education in general or the accreditation of nontraditional education specifically, please feel free to record them below:

150 _____

Name of Person
Completing Questionnaire _____
Phone Number _____



237

Section I

The Council On Postsecondary Accreditation

QUESTION ANALYSIS FOR THE PROJECT TO DEVELOP EVALUATIVE CRITERIA FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATION

(Please return the complete questionnaire with the above label in place)

1. You are currently employed as:

- 133 a. Faculty member.
- 577 b. President of a postsecondary institution.
- 490 c. Chief educational officer of a postsecondary institution. (Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of Instruction, etc.)
- 30 d. Chief executive of a state coordinating or governing board.
- 11 e. Member of a private, higher education coordinating body.
- 39 f. Professional staff member of an accrediting commission.

2. In postsecondary voluntary accreditation one individual may serve several roles. For example, a college president may chair visiting committees and also sit on a commission of the accrediting association.

We therefore ask you to indicate below from which perspective or role you will primarily respond to this inventory of your opinions about the accreditation of nontraditional higher education. (Check only one.)

- 980 a. Primarily as an institutional or program administrator.
- 191 b. Primarily from serving on visiting committees.
- 77 c. Primarily from serving on accrediting commissions.
- 43 d. Primarily as a member of the staff of an accrediting commission.

Information Concerning the Work of Visiting Teams and Accrediting Commissions

3. Indicate whether each of the statements below is "True" or "False" of your experience on or observation of visiting committees reviewing nontraditional institutions or programs.

True False

- 867 113 a. The purpose of the visit was clear to the visiting team.
- 863 118 b. The purpose of the visit was clear to the institution.
- 616 339 c. The visiting committee was adequately oriented to the nature of the nontraditional institution or program prior to or at the beginning of the campus visit.
- 603 355 d. The criteria for the evaluation of the institution or program were clear to the visiting committee.
- 615 342 e. The criteria for the evaluation of the institution were clear to the institution's representatives.
- 807 139 f. The accrediting commission's staff had provided appropriate assistance to the applying institution.
- 759 186 g. The written reports prepared by the institution's staff were adequate.

4. Rank each of the following general matters in terms of the concern they elicit from visiting committees about nontraditional programs and institutions. (Let "1" be the greatest cause for concern.)

2.992 a. Institution's or program's purposes and goals.

4.077 b. Degree requirements.

4.335 c. Teaching

3.616 d. Faculty

5.444 e. Finance

4.412 f. Instructional resources.

6.886 g. Student services.

6.816 h. Facilities

6.395 i. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.

5. Rank each of the following matters in terms of the greatest to least concern they elicit from visiting committees in regard to quality assurance. (The greatest concern should be ranked as "1".)

2.280 a. The comparability of student achievement in the nontraditional program or institution with that of students in traditional programs or institutions.

2.659 b. The consistency of procedures used to evaluate student achievement with the nature and purpose of the nontraditional program or institution.

3.764 c. The general intellectual ability and interests of the typical student in a nontraditional program or institution.

2.301 d. The comparability of the degree expectations and requirements of the nontraditional program and institution with that of similar degrees in traditional institutions.

3.990 e. The provision of instruction, courses or degrees through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.

6. In terms of faculty quality and circumstances in nontraditional higher education, rank each of the following from the greatest to least concern to visiting committees. (Rank "1" as the greatest concern.)

2.870 a. Educational attainment.

2.435 b. Relevant experience.

4.751 c. Evidence of related research or scholarship.

3.595 d. Use of adjunct, part-time faculty.

4.416 e. Independence of faculty judgments on educational attainment of students from managerial concerns.

4.243 f. Work settings conducive to teaching and scholarship.

4.316 g. Academic leadership.

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
(a)	360	122	66	61	67	47	39	34	29
(b)	134	137	118	100	89	92	60	70	25
(c)	42	121	132	158	148	113	59	34	18
(d)	82	162	194	159	106	59	39	19	7
(e)	43	62	83	89	98	139	147	109	55
(f)	42	126	128	140	136	118	82	45	8
(g)	8	13	28	40	73	105	185	244	129
(h)	8	25	33	48	72	104	165	194	176
(i)	108	56	40	31	42	51	51	75	371

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
(a)	266	255	192	112	30
(b)	180	184	275	179	37
(c)	45	101	142	289	278
(d)	280	235	174	134	32
(e)	84	81	71	142	477

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
(a)	277	165	122	98	84	69	34
(b)	134	173	168	129	108	82	55
(c)	30	94	109	140	138	127	211
(d)	184	100	94	87	101	138	145
(e)	79	97	101	122	148	168	134
(f)	61	113	146	142	135	129	123
(g)	84	108	109	131	135	135	147

7. With regard to the awarding of credit for prior achievement, rank the items below which arouse the greatest concerns for visiting committee(s) (with "1" being the cause for greatest concern).

R

3

MRV

3. 2.816 a. Credit for military courses.
4. 3.296 b. Credit for performance on CLEP or other standardized achievement tests.
2. 2.565 c. Credit for performance on examinations developed by the institution.
1. 1.322 d. Credit for on-the-job or life experience learning.

8. Based on your experience or observations of accrediting commission actions on non-traditional education (institutions and programs) how would you describe the commission decision? Please select only one.

746 a. Fair

151

b. Questionable

12 c. Unfair

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
(a)	55	254	302	213
(b)	43	88	275	418
(c)	67	389	203	165
(d)	659	94	44	28

232

Information on Nontraditional Education

9. The term "nontraditional higher education" has many meanings. Select and rank those statements that best represent nontraditional higher education to you.
- WT.MRV
4.292 a. Competency based curricula within conventional institutions.
2. 2.675 b. External degrees granted on the basis of examined achievement without required periods of study or residency.
1. 2.593 c. External degree programs offering off-campus, independent study through instructional systems, programs, and materials designed for home study.
5. 5.483 d. Off-campus, conventional instruction such as military base programs often using part-time and adjunct faculty.
3. 3.152 e. Contract degree programs, individualized not only in terms of instructional means but also in outcomes and achievements expected of graduates.
6. 5.960 f. Educational brokering efforts that offer no instruction or credit but which link learner interests and needs to educational resources such as instruction, assessment of prior learning, and counseling.
7. 6.678 g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.
10. From the following select and rank those options which hold the most promise for sustaining or improving the quality of American higher education.
- R
1. 1.974 a. Competency based curricula within conventional institutions.
4. 4.235 b. External degrees granted on the basis of examined achievement without required periods of study or residency.
3. 3.717 c. External degree programs offering off-campus, independent study through instructional systems, programs, and materials designed for home study.
5. 5.424 d. Off-campus, conventional institutions such as military base programs often using part-time and adjunct faculty.
2. 3.318 e. Contract degree programs, individualized not only in terms of instructional means but also in outcomes and achievements expected of graduates.
7. 7.339 f. Educational brokering efforts that offer no instruction or credit but which link learner interests and needs to educational resources such as instruction, assessment of prior learning, and counseling.
6. 5.552 g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
(a)	186	121	128	133	101	67	123
(b)	289	259	197	125	51	38	19
(c)	259	307	215	122	72	27	16
(d)	71	103	118	125	126	148	85
(e)	228	184	211	150	107	57	12
(f)	84	79	95	128	99	114	140
(g)	31	56	88	107	128	156	187

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
(a)	580	183	111	84	40	20	15
(b)	100	207	170	142	89	66	55
(c)	126	210	217	153	91	52	23
(d)	62	125	132	130	132	107	73
(e)	199	237	179	123	100	57	26
(f)	36	61	77	85	87	151	206
(g)	39	73	119	94	110	134	169

11. From the following select and rank those options which hold the most promise for improving access to groups perceived not to have had adequate access to American higher education.

R WT.MRV

- 6 5.201 a. Competency based curricula within conventional institutions.
- 2 3.167 b. External degrees granted on the basis of examined achievement without regard to required periods of study or residency.
- 1 2.432 c. External degree programs offering off-campus, independent study through instructional systems, programs, and materials designed for home study.
- 3 3.806 d. Off-campus, conventional instruction such as military base programs often using part-time and adjunct faculty.
- 4 3.826 e. Contract degree programs, individualized not only in terms of instructional means but also in outcomes and achievements expected of graduates.
- 5 4.973 f. Educational brokering efforts that offer no instruction or credit but which link learner interests and needs to educational resources such as instruction, assessment of prior learning, and counseling.
- 7 6.021 g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.

12. Nontraditional higher education programs are offered in a variety of circumstances. Of those listed below, select and rank those most likely to threaten the quality of American higher education.

R

- 7 9.994 a. Special nontraditional program(s) of a conventional institution.
- 6 5.837 b. Conversion of an entire conventional curriculum to a new form, i.e., traditional liberal arts program changed to a competency based program.
- 4 4.080 c. Special institutions created by a state system of higher education to offer external degrees.
- 1 2.294 d. Institution or agency created by Federal Government to award credit or to instruct.
- 3 3.000 e. Institution or agency created by a private corporate body to award credit or to instruct.
- 2 2.532 f. A private, not-for-profit or for-profit, free-standing institution established for the sole purpose of offering unconventional degree programs.
- 5 5.523 g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
(a)	146	87	105	114	75	70	201
(b)	231	210	188	124	76	72	27
(c)	308	312	174	114	61	27	10
(d)	145	156	198	145	133	93	43
(e)	124	169	191	183	117	80	24
(f)	152	90	108	101	108	126	111
(g)	44	99	99	100	117	147	166

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
(a)	12	10	7	10	55	133	425
(b)	99	58	84	89	138	237	74
(c)	79	188	150	228	162	57	27
(d)	378	245	222	125	25	22	9
(e)	124	306	279	162	68	23	6
(f)	371	204	179	140	71	24	19
(g)	78	92	100	105	190	151	71

13. With regard to quality assurance, select and rank those items below which are of most concern to you.

- R
W.E.HRV
- 7 8.107 a. Special nontraditional program(s) of a conventional institution.
- 6 5.795 b. Conversion of an entire conventional curriculum to a new form, e. g., traditional liberal arts program changed to a competency based program.
- 4 4.142 c. Special institutions created by a state system of higher education to offer external degrees.
- 2 2.649 d. Institution or agency created by Federal Government to award credit or to instruct.
- 3 2.937 e. Institution created by a private corporate body to award credit or to instruct.
- 1 2.547 f. A private, not-for-profit or for-profit, free-standing institution established for the primary purpose of offering unconventional degree programs.
- 5 5.009 g. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.

14. Many established as well as recently developed programs and institutions are employing a variety of nontraditional practices which deviate from typical academic conventions. Select and rank those deviations listed below which will most affect basic policies and practices of institutional, regional accreditation.

- R
- 2 4.024 a. Significant majority of the teaching staff are adjunct appointees.
- 3 4.242 b. Little or no residency requirements for degree candidates.
- 4 4.495 c. Centers for instruction far removed from campuses.
- 9 8.935 d. Individualized or self-paced instruction.
- 6 5.093 e. Individualized degree expectations or requirements usually formulated by contracts.
- 7 5.805 f. Heavy reliance on multi-media instruction for remote, independent study.
- 5 4.973 g. Stating degree requirements in terms of achievements rather than time or credit hours.
- 10 13.201 h. Emphasis on part-time older students.
- 1 3.547 i. Awarding credit for prior and experiential learning.
- 8 5.967 j. Courses and/or degrees offered by an accredited institution through a contractual relationship with another institution or an unaccredited organization or agency.

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
(a)	88	32	20	16	42	108	370
(b)	83	64	91	86	126	246	73
(c)	76	170	156	202	170	64	27
(d)	302	206	213	156	41	33	15
(e)	129	317	270	131	62	27	13
(f)	368	195	168	143	60	26	35
(g)	91	122	105	110	185	114	61

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
(a)	172	182	152	97	87	60	54	51	49	35
(b)	154	153	143	111	93	80	61	38	42	23
(c)	137	138	155	94	104	63	65	56	41	19
(d)	30	40	47	76	69	73	94	80	81	48
(e)	103	115	117	130	95	72	64	61	32	12
(f)	63	99	114	111	96	95	64	73	45	20
(g)	111	132	139	106	79	63	62	58	40	22
(h)	15	15	13	19	19	36	36	66	135	231
(i)	240	176	130	122	85	60	44	29	39	21
(j)	121	87	87	103	75	71	49	47	48	82

15. Select and rank those basic changes you think accreditation must make to deal fairly and effectively with the deviations identified in the question 14 above.

R
WT. HGV

- 1 2.202 a. Focus more on educational results and less on structure and process.
2 2.839 b. Become more concerned about assuring reasonable comparability in degree programs among institutions--that is, assure that given degrees in given fields have some common meaning in terms of student achievements when offered at different institutions.
5 4.150 c. Use special evaluators to examine in depth the institution's provisions for quality assurance in addition to visiting teams.
7 7.480 d. Refuse to deal with some curricular and institutional deviations as too extreme to be recognized by an accrediting association.
6 5.814 e. Re-emphasize program accreditation in contrast to institutional-wide accreditation.
3 3.739 f. Find direct ways to examine student performances and products.
4 3.979 g. Achieve a consensus on basic principles or standards which should characterize institutional structures and processes

16. Select and rank those functions of voluntary, regional, institutional accreditation you identify as critical.

R
T

- 2.056 a. Promote institutional integrity and improvement.
5 6.486 b. Maintain the independence of the academy; protect academic freedom.
7 9.926 c. Protect the historic prerogatives of faculty in curricular and instructional matters.
9 14.281 d. Protect the investments of established institutions from the incursion of new ones in reach of markets.
2 2.966 e. Assure that respective degrees represent certain minimal attainments.
4 4.881 f. Protect the "consumer interests" of students and the general public.
6 7.967 g. Help to improve the image of higher education to the general public.
8 13.003 h. Be an advocate for institutions to their sponsors whether religious, private non-religious, or municipal, state, and federal governments.
3 3.031 i. Encourage sound innovative and imaginative approaches to producing quality instruction by accredited institutions.

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
(a)	498	164	139	72	58	30	24
(b)	241	233	214	134	73	48	17
(c)	106	166	159	149	131	94	47
(d)	54	73	65	52	53	82	287
(e)	44	109	116	116	121	134	68
(f)	81	254	183	151	107	66	41
(g)	151	149	176	136	87	92	52

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
(a)	519	273	177	79	37	11	7	6	3
(b)	42	93	142	114	146	-95	75	43	23
(c)	12	21	67	86	81	112	106	126	41
(d)	15	14	22	32	35	47	83	87	219
(e)	249	274	218	161	76	46	11	11	1
(f)	88	135	191	182	114	76	55	33	16
(g)	17	35	84	140	148	113	81	79	29
(h)	1	21	22	44	64	79	101	111	131
(i)	231	298	216	155	79	46	21	14	12

17. What do you think the response of traditional institutions will be as they face the decline of the 18-24 year old population in the 1990's and the emergence of non-traditional higher education, particularly that part focused on older part-time students?
(Select as many as you think appropriate.)

- ☐ a. Develop more non-residential programs themselves.
- 743 ☐ b. Recognize more experiential programs themselves.
- 501 ☐ c. Move to stated degree requirements in terms of student performances and products.
- 511 ☐ d. Make greater use of multi-media instructional procedures for independent remote study.
- 594 ☐ e. Use adjunct, temporary faculty more often.
- 393 ☐ f. Reassert the value of traditional, full-time, campus-based study.
- 227 ☐ g. Reassert selective admissions standards.
- 630 ☐ h. Assure quality through exit graduation standards rather than admission standards.
- 851 ☐ i. Offer more non-credit, continuing education programs.

Section III

Administrators' Opinions Concerning the Establishment
And Utilization of Nontraditional Education

For Institutional Administrators Only.

18. Does your institution offer nontraditional programs?

870 Yes

239 No

If yes, what percentage of your institution's total educational effort is nontraditional?

645 About 10 percent

142 About 25 percent

41 About 50 percent

13 About 75 percent

23 One hundred percent

19. Do you have any plans to develop and offer nontraditional programs within the next two years?

692 Yes

346 No

20. From the following select and rank the factors which had the most effect on the establishment of a nontraditional program in your institution:

R 61. MRV.

2 3.417 a. Student requests.

4 6.264 b. Declining traditional enrollments.

7 10.598 c. Institutional financial problems.

5 6.450 d. Educational dream of a top administrator.

3 4.174 e. Basic interest in curricular reform.

6 7.179 f. Meeting competition from other institutions.

8 12.687 g. Stimulus from legislative or state-wide coordinating/governing boards.

9 13.604 h. Accreditation standards, policies and procedures that allow recognition.

1 2.065 i. Needs of the community (business, industry, etc.)

Indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

21. In general the concept of nontraditional higher education is sound.

316 Strongly agree

544 Agree

189 Slightly agree

23 Slightly disagree

33 Disagree

6 Strongly disagree

RANK	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
(a)	124	206	115	88	43	24	16	6	7
(b)	93	73	79	55	49	30	23	22	34
(c)	22	55	37	36	36	45	43	60	32
(d)	97	62	83	49	53	25	27	22	51
(e)	123	112	123	93	42	33	29	13	2
(f)	27	55	88	80	72	56	44	26	4
(g)	27	26	36	29	20	42	42	57	55
(h)	5	18	41	42	35	37	37	49	61
(i)	358	179	96	59	33	11	6	1	2

22. A nontraditional degree program is a logical option within the philosophy and structure of my institution.

312 Strongly agree

439 Agree

182 Slightly agree

49 Slightly disagree

89 Disagree

38 Strongly disagree

23. The establishment of totally new institutions is the most viable alternative for the delivery of nontraditional forms of postsecondary education.

22 Strongly agree

59 Agree

75 Slightly agree

65 Slightly disagree

461 Disagree

433 Strongly disagree

24. Most nontraditional degrees are comparable in quality to traditional degrees.

48 Strongly agree

273 Agree

227 Slightly agree

175 Slightly disagree

276 Disagree

96 Strongly disagree

25. Nontraditional higher education is appealing for economic reasons (i.e., it is less expensive for an institution to deliver).

68 Strongly agree

273 Agree

277 Slightly agree

163 Slightly disagree

260 Disagree

65 Strongly disagree

26. College and university faculties generally support the concept of nontraditional higher education.

4 Strongly agree
78 Agree
210 Slightly agree
253 Slightly disagree
489 Disagree
86 Strongly disagree

27. Nontraditional programs and institutions are treated fairly by accreditation.

26 Strongly agree
442 Agree
284 Slightly agree
150 Slightly disagree
93 Disagree
16 Strongly disagree

28. Nontraditional higher education presents a basic problem to the accrediting community.

174 Strongly agree
553 Agree
235 Slightly agree
50 Slightly disagree
89 Disagree
11 Strongly disagree

29. A new, national accrediting agency should be created for nontraditional institutions.

35 Strongly agree
66 Agree
48 Slightly agree
72 Slightly disagree
395 Disagree
504 Strongly disagree

30. Graduates of nontraditional programs and institutions are treated equally with graduates with similar degrees from traditional programs and institutions.

12 Strongly agree
184 Agree
188 Slightly agree
277 Slightly disagree
359 Disagree
56 Strongly disagree

31. Nontraditional higher education is a fad which will run a cycle of popularity and then fade into relative obscurity.

14 Strongly agree
55 Agree
152 Slightly agree
200 Slightly disagree
524 Disagree
184 Strongly disagree

32. Institutions accredited by one regional association should not be allowed to offer credit courses and degree programs in another region without the regional association of the area in which the program is to be offered approving the program.

242 Strongly agree
386 Agree
109 Slightly agree
77 Slightly disagree
218 Disagree
91 Strongly disagree

33. More nontraditional programs will be focused on older, part-time students in the 1980's than there are now.

361 Strongly agree
600 Agree
117 Slightly agree
18 Slightly disagree
23 Disagree
14 Strongly disagree

34. Students generally support the concept of a nontraditional higher education.

18-24 year old students.

608 Yes

453 No

Older students.

987 Yes

86 No

Part-time students.

1002 Yes

60 No

35. Which of the following groups, in your opinion, is most resistant to establishing a nontraditional degree within an institution?

59 Students

874 Faculty

205 General Academic Administrators

258 Graduate School Officials

183 Registrars

66 Presidents

Accreditation of Nontraditional Education

For Accreditation Commission Members Only.

(Indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

36. As a member of an Accrediting Commission in reviewing nontraditional institutions and nontraditional programs of accredited institutions, what has been your experience with those reviews and what are your perceptions of the accreditation process related to nontraditional higher education?

- a. The Commission was adequately informed of the nontraditional nature of the institutions or programs under consideration.

28 Strongly agree
99 Agree
33 Slightly agree
13 Slightly disagree
19 Disagree
2 Strongly disagree

- b. The established policies, standards, and procedures of the Commission on which I serve were adequate to deal fairly and effectively with the nontraditional institutions and programs that have been considered by my Commission.

21 Strongly agree
77 Agree
39 Slightly agree
24 Slightly disagree
28 Disagree
4 Strongly disagree

- c. In my judgment, the accreditation of nontraditional institutions or programs poses major problem for accrediting commissions.

38 Strongly agree
64 Agree
48 Slightly agree
12 Slightly disagree
25 Disagree
7 Strongly disagree

Other Comments

If you have other comments concerning nontraditional education in general or the accreditation of nontraditional education specifically, please feel free to record them below:

Name of Person
Completing Questionnaire _____
Phone Number _____

FINAL INFORMATION

DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED TO DATE - August 25, 1978

COPA CLASSIFICATION CODES

	<u>Received</u>	<u>Mailed</u>	<u>Perce Rece</u>
C Commission Members _____	72	178	40
I Institutional Representatives _____	193	408	17
P Presidents _____	33	56	60
PV Presidents on Visiting Team _____	0	2	
PC Presidents on Commissions _____	3	4	75
CV Commission Members on Visiting Teams _____	13	26	50
OA Other Accrediting Agencies _____	19	42	45
CS Commission Staffs (Higher Education) _____	17	23	73
S State Higher Education Boards _____	27	50	54
CO COPA Staff and Board _____	16	27	59
GP General Presidents _____	926	2,499	37
Totals	<u>1,319</u>	<u>3,315</u>	39

Report No. 9

REGIONAL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

By Kay J. Andersen

REGIONAL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

Introduction

In addressing the subject of traditional or nontraditional higher education in the United States, one must understand the role of accreditation and accrediting standards. Standards, implied or stated, have served as a basis for accrediting decisions since the accrediting process began in this country at the turn of the century. During the interesting evolution of standards, particularly among regional accrediting agencies, there have been times when the word "standard" was banned from official accrediting documents, but, even during those periods, it is safe to say that evaluators and accrediting commissions used something approaching standards, particularly when making difficult decisions.

In 1960 William K. Selden wrote a book on accreditation. The title is as appropriate now as it was then: Accreditation: The Struggle Over Standards in Higher Education.¹ That struggle continues and of late has intensified, as shown in higher education literature and the surveys and papers that comprise this study on nontraditional education.

American higher education, though enjoying some common traditions, is characterized by self-direction, diversity, change, some disorder, and state-wide and regional differences. Despite some weaknesses and abuses, it has served well the needs of a heterogeneous population. In considering its

successes and failures, it must be remembered that accreditation is only one of many forces impinging on collegiate institutions.

This paper draws freely from studies and surveys done in recent years by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation staff members, Dorothy G. Petersen, and William Earl Troutt, which confirms the findings of this assessment of nontraditional education that regional accrediting commissions operating at the postsecondary level are more alike than different. They share common purposes and some common procedures for institutional self-study, on-site reviews, and accrediting decisions. These commonalities are not unusual when one considers the organizations and forces which have created opportunities for regional staffs and commissioners to exchange views and develop common policies, first under the National Committee of Regional Accrediting Agencies, then the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE), and, most recently, through the good offices of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). Of these three organizations, it is clear that FRACHE provided the best milieu for regional commissions to develop some common purposes, policies, and procedures. In addition, the exchange of evaluators among regions, the general mobility of college personnel, and the common origins of the accrediting movement have contributed to this commonality. The result is that actions by one commission are generally known to and accepted by institutions and agencies in other parts of the country.

There are, however, some significant differences among regionals in the content and application of accrediting standards, principles, and procedures. The net effect of these differences may serve to strengthen,

rather than vitiate, higher education, but at least the phenomenon needs to be explained and understood. Differences begin with variations in nomenclature. One may find in accrediting literature such terms as "standards," "principles," "self-study guidelines," "characteristics of excellence," and "criteria." There are some procedural and policy differences and differences in basic philosophies of accreditation. Some regions claim that accrediting decisions are made almost entirely on the basis of an institution's ability to formulate and adequately satisfy its own objectives, while others include, as well, compliance with accrediting standards.

Are standards a measuring stick that can be applied to various objects for comparison? Do they represent a minimum level of acceptability? Are they areas of concern with suggestions that imply the directions of an appropriate answer? Are they rubber rulers? Are standards immutable laws governing the universe of higher education? Are they ideals toward which institutions strive? Are they good practices? Or are they a combination of these ideas? At the March 1978 meeting of the Western College Association, Thurston E. Manning discussed these and other aspects of educational standards.²

Other questions arise. If standards are used, what do they mean to an established institution, or to one applying for candidacy or initial accreditation? How are accreditation standards related to the self-study process and to the work of the accrediting team and the Commission? What are the differences between the public perception of accreditation standards and that held by the higher education community, accrediting commissions, and their staffs? Can one compare regional standards with the more prescriptive variety used by programmatic accrediting agencies?

The immediate purpose of this paper is to analyze regional policies, procedures, and standards with reference to nontraditional education. This analysis reveals a few standards, policies or procedures designed particularly for the evaluation of nontraditional education. Letters which came with regional documents to the project staff suggest that most evaluation of nontraditional education proceeds through the use of regular policies and procedures and with the assistance of some evaluators who are sensitive to innovative education.

All regional higher education commissions use, in complete or adapted form, the following policies which have a bearing on nontraditional education. These were developed through cooperative efforts of regional staffs and national committees and were adopted by FRACHE and subsequently have been recognized by COPA:³

- Interim Statement on Accreditation and Non-Traditional Study
- Innovation
- Postsecondary Educational Programs Conducted by Accredited or Candidate Institutions on Military Bases
- Accreditation and Off-Campus Educational Activities (recently adopted in principle by regionals)
- Interim Guidelines on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations
- Study Abroad Programs
- Accreditation of Operationally Separate Units
- Substantive Change

While, as already stated, most regional commissions evaluate nontraditional education within the context of these FRACHE policies as well as those

policies used for traditional institutions, there are some exceptions which will be discussed in the following section.

Evolution of Regional Standards

Almost everyone who has thought or written about accreditation in this country is in agreement on its origin and, to a lesser extent, on the nature of its evolution through the past sixty years. It is true that the American approach to evaluating and improving higher education is unique. In most other countries the responsibility for quality assurance rests with a national ministry of education, while in this country colleges and universities depend upon a system of voluntary accreditation operated by peers. In an attempt to develop more uniform college admission standards, associations of colleges were formed around the turn of the century. Membership requirements became the foundation for accreditation standards. There follows a brief account of each association in the order established and with particular reference to the evolution of accrediting standards for colleges and universities.

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

The New England Association is the oldest and youngest accrediting region in the United States. It was founded in 1885 as the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools for "the advancement of the cause of liberal education by the promotion of interest common to both colleges and preparatory schools."⁴

The name was changed in 1914 to the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and in 1971 to the New England Association of Schools

and Colleges. It was not until 1952 that the Association was established as an accrediting agency, for it was in that year that the assembled delegates voted to acquire the evaluation of institutions for initial or continued membership. William J. MacLeod, Director of Evaluation of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, has provided a chronology of events leading to the 1952 decision. Some of this information was drawn from a dissertation done by John Monbouquette at Boston College:⁵

1920--Eleven minimum requirements were proposed for a college of liberal arts. These were not adopted.

1925--The original eleven minimum requirements became nine, now called standards, and these constituted conditions of membership. In the same year, the New England region was the only region without an accredited list of institutions.

1927--Faced with all kinds of new institutions, including teacher colleges, the plans for an institutional membership were adopted. An important statement was added that indicated that an institution could be excluded from membership if it did not meet the standards.

1935--The first record is found of an attempt made to raise the question of how the New England Association could know its standards were being maintained. Apparently, there were those who had doubts about the efficiency of having standards without any method of validity.

1940--The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education raised the question of an accreditation policy. Again it published a roster of members, which implied accreditation; yet, there was no accreditation program in New England on the level with those in other regional associations. In December of 1941, the annual meeting voted no change in present practice.

1946--The New England College Entrance Certification Board was dissolved, leaving New England without any certifying agency. A special committee recommended that colleges and independent schools needed none and wanted none. The Public School Commission, however, began to reveal a new interest in the New England Association. Membership was increased, and there appeared to be developing a strong movement in favor of accreditation.

1946--The first record is found of an on-site visit by the Commission on Higher Education to a teacher's college in Connecticut.

1948--It was suggested that all institutions applying for membership pay an application fee for costs involved in determining if they truly qualified. At the same meeting, the suggestion was made to reevaluate member institutions of the Commission on Independent Schools. Others raised the question of whether or not this was necessary for all institutions. A committee was established to rethink the question of accreditation. That committee reported on the rigidity of accreditation practices in some of the other regions and recommended that great caution be the watch word. If the New England Association decided to become an accrediting association, it would have to have broad and flexible accreditation procedures.

1949--The Association of American Universities said it would cease to publish a list of approved members. This implied that great pressure would be brought to bear upon regional associations to assume greater responsibility in accrediting colleges. In March 1949, the National Commission on Regional Accrediting Agencies was formed, its purpose being (1) to publish a list of accredited institutions of higher education and (2) to establish some uniformity of philosophy and procedures among regional accrediting agencies.

1952--The U.S. Office of Education apparently indicated that, if no lists of accredited institutions were published, it would have to do so. Pressure was being brought not only on the higher education level, but in particular on the secondary school level. Member institutions began to sound the battle cry, one principal of a secondary school inquiring if there were any provisions for the members of the New England Association to veto any action by the Executive Committee to establish accreditation and evaluation procedures. After intense debate, many meetings, and thorough consideration, the Association at its 67th annual meeting adopted the idea of participating in the accreditation process by a vote of 268 to 4. The tasks of developing reexamination procedures and of studying standards of admission remained to be done, but full participation in the accreditation process was voted in 1952.

Over the next few years the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education developed various procedures and standards. There have been numerous revisions, some large, some small. Current standards have been revised only

in a minimal way over the past few years. The Commission has been working on a revision of the standards since 1977, however, and approved at its last meeting (September 1978) the standards it is proposing to the institutional membership.

The revised Standards for Membership list twelve major areas of concern:

1. Objectives;
2. Evaluation and Planning;
3. Organization and Governance;
4. Ethical Practices;
5. Program and Instruction;
6. Special Activities;
7. Faculty;
8. Student Services;
9. Library and Learning Resources;
10. Physical Resources;
11. Financial Resources; and
12. Publication and Advertising.

These standards are primarily qualitative in nature, apply to the institution as a whole, and are interpreted within the framework of the institution's stated objectives. Within the context of these membership standards an institution is expected to prepare a self-study by reference to some suggested questions. These questions are designed to produce descriptive and statistical material, but with major emphasis on appraisal and forecast.

The only policies and procedures pertaining to nontraditional education are the ones adopted by FRACHE. Given the very small number of nontraditional institutions in the New England region, new policies in this area have been given low priority. When nontraditional institutions are evaluated, the commission staff furnishes the committees involved with guidelines and policies from other regions.

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Information in this section was supplied by Dorothy Heindel and Robert Kirkwood.

The Middle States Association was founded in 1887 as the College Association of Pennsylvania. This development was the result of a series of meetings between Swarthmore College President Edward H. Magill and officials of other colleges, "as to the feasibility of calling a meeting of college authorities, with the objects of establishing closer relations with one another and of procuring certain legislation in favor of educational institutions tending to this result."⁶

In 1919 the Association adopted a definition and standards for colleges of liberal arts and sciences and established a Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The definitions and standards were prescriptive. In November of 1921, after careful examination and consideration of facts, and "inspection" of colleges requesting inspection, an "approved" list of institutions was adopted and published. The approval applied only to the colleges of liberal arts and sciences singly, or within institutions, but did not include technical schools of any kind. Certain colleges, eleven in number, even though most were and still are considered liberal arts colleges, did not meet fully the definitions and standards and thus were not included in the approved list.

Definitions and standards questionnaire/application forms were first issued in 1920 and dealt with all facets of an institution and were prescriptive in nature. In 1953 questionnaires were published--again prescriptive--for the institution as a whole and for programs such as teacher

education, engineering, library school, social work, etc. Questionnaire guides for use in preparing a self-study were published requesting quantitative data such as the numbers of volumes, pamphlets, and public documents in a library.

These quite prescriptive questionnaires could easily have led--and to a degree did lead--to homogenization of higher education institutions. In the early years, 1920s and 1930s, institutions were added to the approved list following "inspection" visits, usually by one or two members of the Commission. More often than not, one person visited and prepared an inspection visit report, and on the basis of these reports and discussion, institutions were added to the approved list.

In 1931 institutions were referred to as "accredited." However, institutions continued to be denied status for reasons such as the unwise investment of funds, unsatisfactory student entrance records, insufficient training of faculty, an almost entire lack of separation between secondary school and junior college faculties, and a somewhat unbalanced curriculum.

In the 1940s the Commission on Higher Education (still known as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education--the name was changed in December 1969) began cooperative (joint) evaluations with various professional agencies such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, Engineers' Council for Professional Development, American Chemistry Society, American Association of Theological Schools, etc. These joint evaluations proved beneficial in time and cost savings, and the effort continues.

In the 1950s questionnaires for self-study preparation were still in use, but they had become less prescriptive and no longer were prepared for

specific schools within an institution (departments, etc.) but were institutional in scope.

From 1920 until 1946 institutions remained on the accredited/approved list without much contact between them and the Commission. Some institutions were required to report on various issues, but revisits were not a part of the Commission's procedures. In 1946 the members of the Middle States Association voted to direct the Commission to send evaluation teams periodically to all member institutions. The first cycle of revisits took place in 1957 and was found to be so stimulating that the Association agreed without dissent to continue the practice regularly, normally at ten-year intervals.

In 1949 the first meeting of the National Committee of Regional Accrediting Agencies (NCRAA) was held. The first item of business was an agreement to publish a list of accredited institutions of higher education in the United States. The second was to join with the American Council on Education (ACE) in the formulation of a statement of philosophy and principles of accrediting procedures using the North Central Association's (NCA) manual as a guide and indicating points of difference, omissions, or other variations from it.

No doubt the NCA manual and this comparison of procedures had some impact on the Middle States approach to evaluation/accreditation. However, Executive Secretary Taylor Jones was very much a catalyst in moving from a quantitative to a qualitative approach and to selected topics and case studies on an evaluation vehicle in the early 1960s. In the early 1970s he foresaw many changes for the seventies and beyond.

The 1968 questionnaire for self-evaluation, while a questionnaire, dealt with eliciting basic information about an institution, its students,

programs, objectives, faculty, teaching, instructional resources and equipment, organization and administration, and outcomes. By July 1971 the questionnaire form had been withdrawn from circulation and a narrative document prepared for self-study and evaluation, under the direction of Robert Kirkwood, who succeeded Jones as the Commission's executive officer.

In the earlier days junior colleges, technical schools, teacher education institutions, and community colleges were not considered institutions of higher education. In the early 1950s community and junior colleges were considered viable and necessary, and a specific set of guidelines was established for them. These guidelines were removed from circulation in 1976.

"Characteristics of Excellence, 1977" applies to all institutions of higher education and sets forth the basic approach to the evaluation/accreditation process for all institutions: two-year, four-year, free-standing professional, upper-division. All seek status according to their aims, objectives, and purpose. The one common thread or requirement is the appropriate authority to award academic degrees--associate through the doctorate.

The newly adopted "Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Standards for Middle States Accreditation" identifies important common denominators of "superior educational institutions...irrespective of particular settings." Dorothy Petersen concludes that these documents place heavy reliance upon an institution's ability to prepare an analytical self-study and upon the subjective judgment of a visiting team. They are descriptive rather than prescriptive. Both refrain completely from the application of specific formulas or measures and from specific requirements concerning the content or format of the self-study. They do not include anything particular

about nontraditional education except a paragraph entitled, "Innovation and Experimentation," which parallels the FRACHE policy on innovation. The Higher Education Commission also has a policy on "Considerations in the Evaluation of Proprietary, Postsecondary Institutions for Accreditation."

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Encouraged by the development of the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools in 1885, the North Central Association was founded in March 1895 with the primary objective to establish closer relations between the colleges and the secondary schools of the North Central states. Of major concern to the colleges and universities in this area was the preparation of high school students for college work. The result was the establishment of the Association's first commission, the Commission on Accredited Schools. In 1904, 156 secondary schools were accredited by the Association.

The Association was concerned entirely with standardizing and inspecting high schools, until 1906 when the Commission's name was changed to the Commission on Accredited Schools and Colleges. A set of standards was developed, and each state within North Central was asked to establish a college inspection board. In 1913, the first list of accredited colleges was published. In 1916, a separate commission was established to deal with colleges and universities. Shortly thereafter, colleges were grouped into three divisions--colleges and universities, junior colleges, and teacher training institutions--with distinct standards for each division.

Although the standards were constantly revised, concern was expressed by influential educators that they had become too quantitative, failed

to see the institution in toto, and did not recognize fully the special purposes of an institution. In 1934, after a comprehensive three-year study funded by the Rockefeller General Education Board and the Association, standards were literally discarded in favor of a philosophy that judged an institution on the basis of its avowed purposes and the total pattern it presented, rather than on compliance with a series of discrete, sometimes unrelated quantitative criteria. This made good sense to North Central, and undoubtedly came as a relief to institutions and accreditors who agonized over the low correlation between standards and educational quality.⁷

According to Louis Geiger's history of North Central, "This old quantitative standards were altered only gradually, in part because a great many examiners were more comfortable with concrete measures than only partially defined ideas."⁸ Words such as "inspection" and "standards" were replaced by "evaluation," "criteria," "ideals," "growth," and "objectives."

In 1940 separate report forms were developed for two-year institutions, four-year colleges, master's degree-granting institutions, and complex universities offering doctorates and professional degrees. This event marked a further step in the movement away from a single standard for higher education.

It was not until 1957 that a new program of periodic review visits for all NCA institutions was begun. Prior to that, institutions, once accredited, were only required to submit certain biennial reports.

In 1958, the Guide for the Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Education was issued, to assist accreditation examiners. This came to be known

as the "period of purposes," when purpose became "the primary principle of evaluation."⁹

The movement away from quantitative measures and statistical forms "forced the evaluators to derive norms out of their own experience, and such norms were validated by the Association when it commissioned people to serve as evaluators."¹⁰ In order to prepare evaluators more adequately for this heavy burden, the Association secured a Carnegie Foundation grant of \$147,000 in 1956, and a supplemental grant of \$61,000 in 1960, to carry out a consultant examiner training program.

According to Thurston E. Manning, Director of the North Central Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, there may have been an over-reaction to the earlier problems of qualification and standardization. The Commission has now developed explicit statements on institutions called, "criteria for eligibility." In addition, the Commission has adopted a statement on institutional obligations of membership, which are rather explicit requirements. The Commission has also developed some effective procedures for the evaluation of off-campus educational programs. The result of these recent efforts is a combination of the explicit criteria and more general statements serving as the basis for evaluation of the success of the institution in meeting its purposes.

For the evaluation of nontraditional education, North Central uses the FRACHE policies and also sends to teams and institutions papers on non-traditional programs and institutions written by the staff.

Since the 1934 North Central study, most other regional and some of the programmatic accrediting agencies have moved away from highly specific

standards. With far less diversity than we now experience, it was possible and perhaps commendable for regional commissions to evaluate an institution and make accrediting decisions almost entirely in terms of the institution's stated purposes and its success in meeting those purposes. However, there are forces identified later in this paper, such as a substantial increase in the number and variety of nontraditional institutions and programs, which are moving some regional commissions to include compliance with more clearly defined accreditation standards as a condition for accreditation. This difference in regional operation is not clearly understood.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

The following information was taken from G. Jack Allen's "A History of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1949-1975"¹¹ (part of which was published in the North Central Quarterly, Winter 1978).

In November 1895 the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States (eventually to be named the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) held its first meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. As was the case with New England and North Central, the major purpose of this Association was to establish greater uniformity of education among secondary schools and colleges, with particular reference to requirements for graduation from secondary schools and the establishment of admissions and graduation requirements for colleges and universities. In 1911 the Commission on Secondary Schools was established, followed in 1917 by the Commission for Accreditation of Institutions of Higher Education. Institutions were admitted

to membership if they met published standards designed to measure institutional quality. In 1921 there were twenty standards, applying only to senior colleges. (Junior colleges had not yet been admitted.) The standards were stated very precisely and quantitatively. They specified college entrance requirements, semester hours required for graduation, the number of college departments for particular enrollment, salary ranges, the number of classroom hours for teachers, the number of students in classes, the number of library books, etc.

By 1929 the Commission was operating with two sets of standards, one set for colleges of arts and sciences and teacher training colleges, and another for junior colleges. Despite criticisms that they were too quantitative, the standards remained essentially unchanged through 1949, and institutions were required to meet all twenty-one standards.

Negro colleges were not members of the Association but were placed on an approved list, which was divided into class A and class B institutions. "A" colleges met the standards; "B" colleges did not meet all standards, but the quality of their work was deemed sufficient to warrant admission of graduates to postgraduate programs.

In 1950, new standards for colleges of arts and sciences and teacher training colleges were approved, but with no radical changes. It is significant to note, however, that the standards on library did not specify a minimum number of volumes. At the same time, there were still required faculty salary scales for the ranks of instructor through professor.

Development of standards for graduate study was surrounded by controversy. However, in 1951 graduate standards were approved.

New standards dealing with off-campus work went into effect in 1954 and, characteristic of the South, they too were quite specific. For example, branch campuses were forbidden to organize extension classes, and institutions setting up branches were to avoid unnecessary programs duplicating the efforts of other members of the Association. Subsequently, much time and effort were expended in revising and updating standards on off-campus educational activities.

Precedent for the adoption of increasingly qualitative standards had been set by the North Central Association in the 1930s, and in the 1950s other regionals moved in that direction. There were also forces calling for new methods of evaluation in view of the fact that many institutions had not been evaluated since the time of their first accreditation. On a pilot basis in 1958-59, several institutions in the Southern Association underwent self-study programs using a Brief Manual of Suggestions for Institutional Evaluation. This manual encouraged institutions to evaluate themselves in terms of their own purposes and to involve the entire college community in a study. As a result of these experiences, the Executive Council of the Commission on Colleges called for a complete restudy of Commission standards.

In 1962 this project resulted in the adoption of one set of standards applicable to all types of higher education institutions, to replace the two then in effect. Replacing the twenty-one standards were eleven standards, consisting of two parts, the standard itself and illustrations and interpretations. Several quantitative requirements were eliminated, although illustrations of the standard still retained quantitative provisions (e.g., the library would seat at least one-fourth of the greatest number of students

on campus at any one period of the day; a maximum number of credit hours toward a degree was specified to be allowed for off-campus work; a minimum number of hours was given for a master's degree; etc.). Despite the overall qualitative emphasis of these standards, it was still necessary for new and established institutions to comply with Commission standards. Sanctions were imposed upon those institutions which were in serious violation.

In 1964 the Executive Council approved a set of supplementary guidelines for evaluating occupationally oriented programs in two-year colleges. In 1971 a new standard nine was adopted, making it possible for nontraditional programs to be accorded equal status with the other academic components of an institution. This standard also required institutions to record noncredit programs by means of the Continuing Education Unit.

As had happened in the North Central Association before, the evolution of Southern Association standards from quantitative to qualitative placed more responsibility on the judgments of evaluators and commissioners. The present position of the Southern Association strives for a balance between basic values and a willingness to accept the nontraditional program and institution.

Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Dr. James F. Bemis, Secretary-Treasurer of the Northwest Association, has recorded the major steps in the development of that Association and its Commission on Colleges.¹²

The Association was established in 1917 with charter institutions from Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The goal was to foster close cooperation between the secondary and higher education schools of the region

in the promotion of both their individual and common interests. By 1967 the present seven-state region was established, and that year also marked the beginning of an informal organization, the Far West Council on Accreditation, for the purpose of exploring the possibility of federating the Northwest and Western Associations. Negotiations continue through the auspices of this Council.

No standards for colleges were developed prior to 1921. Standards of the North Central Association in 1921 were adopted but never used because the American Council on Education formulated standards for four-year institutions, junior colleges, and teacher training schools, which were accepted by the Northwest Association in 1922. Those standards were similar in format, but there were appropriate changes in content for the three types of institutions. There were seven standards, mainly objective, which apparently met the needs of the times. They dealt with structure rather than function and were considered to cover minimum essentials.

Criticisms of the objective standards as being too mechanical and requiring superficial information of a college increased during the early 1930s. In 1934 North Central led the way by discarding objective criteria in favor of the qualitative approach, which evaluated an institution on the basis of the total pattern it presented. An institution was judged in terms of the purposes it sought to serve. The Northwest Association began the qualitative approach to evaluation in 1939.

The use of minimal qualitative standards and detailed institutional descriptions continued until the mid-1960s. The general statements, referred to as standards or principles, directed attention to the various features

to be reviewed in the several areas. An outline for an extensive institutional self-description was provided; however, there was not an adequate set of qualitative standards for evaluation of a postsecondary school. Reports submitted by institutions seeking accreditation tended to be unduly long and highly descriptive with a minimum of analysis.

During 1965 and 1966 a committee of the College Commission formulated a set of qualitative standards and a guide for self-study that emphasized analysis and appraisal with a minimum of description. As of December 1977, approximately 200 institutions, which reflected the diversity of American higher education, had prepared self-studies and had been evaluated under the 1966 guide, or a subsequent revision. This approach to institutional accreditation, which aims to understand, to evaluate, and to improve, appears to have had success. Reactions from officials of institutions evaluated have been favorable for the most part. Committees of the Commission have worked to improve the instrument through revised editions published in 1968, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, and 1978. Although the current standards and guide direct much attention to structure and process, they also emphasize assessment of the educational outcomes of an institution.

The current revision of the standards of the Northwest Association Commission on Colleges is perhaps the most detailed of all the regions in the kinds of information requested in the institutional self-study. Standard VI, Continuing Education and Special Instructional Activities, covers in some detail the same areas as Standard Nine in the Southern and Western region.

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

As an organization of higher education institutions and secondary schools, the Western Association is only sixteen years old. However, some further explanation is in order. Its antecedent was the Western College Association, established in southern California in 1924 as an association of college and university leaders dedicated to the discussion of common problems. No formal statement of qualifications was needed, and no distinction was made between the college and university members and cultural institutions until 1942 when full membership was limited to colleges and universities.¹³

In 1948 a revised constitution and bylaws moved the Association into the accrediting arena and a Committee on Membership and Standards was organized for this purpose. Prior to 1948 senior California institutions were accredited by the Association of American Universities, or in some cases by the Northwest Association. Accrediting procedures, which did not use the word "standards," included a series of checklists and instructions for institutional self-study. At the same time, however, the Association had devised Policies of Accreditation, which opened with a statement on the meaning of accreditation and listed eligibility criteria that resemble those used today.

Reflective of the North Central shift to qualitative criteria, the Western Association adopted the position in 1951 that qualitative standards should be the same for all types of institutions but with some flexibility in terms of institutional type, scope, and purpose. "The Western College Association believes that while the objectives of higher education are not

wholly amenable to precise description, they can and should be stated clearly enough to lend themselves to evaluation. This can be done without imposing standardization of uniformity."¹⁴

Through the years the Policies of Accreditation became the Statement of Standards, which really mean criteria for eligibility. This statement was used in conjunction with the Manual of Accrediting Procedures, which later became Accreditation Schedules: Guide for the Evaluation of Colleges and Universities. In 1969-70 a composite document was produced under the rearranged title Guide for the Evaluation of Colleges and Universities, subtitled Accreditation Schedules. The word "standards" was not used again until the new Handbook on Accreditation was adopted in 1978.

In 1975 the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges produced a common accreditation handbook that included eleven self-study guidelines. Each guideline, e.g., Functions and Objectives, included a criterion followed by questions designed to assist the institution in describing, evaluating, and forecasting. While both commissions used the same handbook, each commission had its own policy manual.

To meet nontraditional needs within the Senior Commission, a policy was developed in 1975 on Special Educational Programs, patterned closely after the Southern Association's Standard Nine. Subsequently revised through the year-long work of a task force, that policy has now been redesigned as Standard Nine and covers four broad areas:

1. Off-Campus Programs and Degree or Non-Degree Credit Courses;
2. Contractual Relations for Credit Programs and Courses;
3. Travel-Study Programs;
4. Non-Credit Programs of Continuing and Extended Education.

In addition to this standard, the Senior Commission is guided by two additional policies: Evaluation and Use of Credit and Credit for Prior Learning Experience. The Senior Commission annual report requests detailed information on off-campus, innovative, and contractual programs. In November 1978, following a two-year study, this Commission adopted a series of nine standards and self-study processes that attempts to strike an acceptable balance between Commission standards and individualized philosophies and practices.

In 1952 a Commission for Accrediting Junior Colleges was created to make recommendations to the Western College Association. Each college was evaluated in terms of the standards of the California State Junior College Association and the Commission. When the Western Association of Schools and Colleges was incorporated in 1962, its Accrediting Commission for Junior Colleges modified its standards and procedures for the evaluation of two-year institutions based upon the original documents of the California State Junior College Association Commission. The "Kit of Accreditation Materials" contained these standards and procedures until revised in 1972, at which time they became the Manual of Accreditation for Junior Colleges, accompanied by Guidelines for Self-Study.

In August 1975, as already stated, the Junior and Senior Commissions developed a common Handbook of Accreditation. Although the Senior Commission found it necessary to develop its own standards and procedures in 1978, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges continues with the 1975 document, with some modifications. The last few years have seen an emphasis from a purely descriptive self-study to evaluation through self-appraisal and master planning techniques. Accreditation at this level

has become an on-going process geared to regular planning, assessment, and research.

There are several reasons why the Western, Northwest, and Southern commissions freely use the word "standards" in rather detailed accreditation manuals. For many years, higher education in the Southern Association was of very uneven quality, and in order to elevate the entire level of college experience in that part of the country, it was found necessary to develop more precise statements. Because of an unusually large number of non-traditional institutions in the western part of the United States, especially in California, and for reasons that are quite different from those in the Southern region, the Western and Northwest regions have found it necessary to adopt standards and procedures more in keeping with those of the Southern Association than those used by the other three accrediting regions. Further explanation of these phenomena are included later.

Current Forces in Regional Accreditation

In August 1978 William Earl Troutt presented to George Peabody College for Teachers a dissertation entitled, "The Quality Assurance Function of Regional Accreditation." In his appendix, Troutt presents a comprehensive overview of regional accreditation standards, paralleling to some extent the work done by Dorothy Petersen.¹⁵ Troutt takes issue with current accreditation standards and procedures which lean heavily on educational structure and processes. For ascertaining educational quality, he questions the philosophical basis of this indirect approach to quality assurance:

Accreditation standards generally assume that no common benchmarks exist for assessing institutional quality.

Accrediting associations suggest that imposing any common measure of institutional quality would destroy institutional diversity. All regional associations agree that institutional evaluations should be solely in terms of stated purposes and objectives.¹⁶

On the basis of the author's analysis of regional standards and that by Dorothy Petersen, this statement is not altogether accurate. As noted, the Southern Association Commission on Colleges requires compliance with those standards adopted by the College Delegate Assembly as a condition for accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. This is true more recently in the Northwest and Western regions. All three examine an institution and make accrediting decisions on the basis of compliance with standards and the institution's ability to state and implement its own purposes.

It should also be noted that a COPA criterion for recognition requires of an accrediting agency that "it recognizes the right of institutions or programs to be evaluated in the light of their own stated purposes so long as these purposes demonstrably fall within and adequately reflect the definitions of general educational purposes or programs established by the accrediting body."¹⁷

A few years ago, Frank Newman directed a task force that severely criticized accreditation for its strict adherence to irrelevant standards that discourage innovation and promote homogenization of education.¹⁸ There are also some nontraditionalists who feel that anything traditional is inimical to changes long overdue in higher education. There are some state legislators and members of certain minority groups who are sure that accreditation is an elitist process with little sensitivity to the needs of the

common people. In this milieu, some educational entrepreneurs espouse the kind of complete freedom in higher education that would disregard conventional values, traditions, processes, and degree structure in order to "market" education.

Following the growth and general campus unrest of the sixties, society and higher education (as a basic component thereof) are experiencing a conservative swing. Students have become more serious and are seeking more applied programs. Some are becoming disenchanted with grade reforms, narrative transcripts, and off-campus housing. They are seeking more direction in major fields as well as in general education. They are becoming more sophisticated in the selection of a college and in that process are inquiring more deeply into an institution's accredited status. This development is related to the consumer protection movement in higher education, about which much is being written.

The entire accountability movement is another significant force in the development of accrediting standards. Institutions must be more accountable to their boards and to governmental and private funding agencies. Indeed, because of the success of higher education in the development of an educated population capable of criticizing the very society that provided those opportunities, there are greater expectations for higher education to deliver an even more abundant life.

As this study of nontraditional education points out so clearly, the area of extended and nontraditional education has raised questions about the strength and scope of present accrediting policies and procedures. As higher education was caught unprepared for the student rebellion, the accrediting

community responded unsurely and unevenly to the nontraditional movement. Lacking was a clear set of reference points necessary to make tough-minded and difficult decisions about new institutions and nontraditional programs within existing colleges. The burden of judgment resting upon volunteer evaluators and commissioners has thus far been excessive. The situation has been further exacerbated by the shift from "higher education" to "postsecondary education," a subtle change that has produced a much wider range of institutions than ever before seeking accreditation, some with more materialistic, pragmatic motives than traditional colleges and universities.

Criticisms of accreditation have also come from state higher education approval officers and from those agencies administering veterans' benefits; yet there are still many states that have ineffective (or nonexistent) laws governing the licensing or chartering of higher education units. To address this problem, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) published a report in June 1973 of a Task Force on Model State Legislation for Approval of Postsecondary Educational Institutions and Authorization to Grant Degrees. The task force drew its membership from ECS, State governments, state approval agencies, the Office of Education, major accrediting agencies, postsecondary educational institutions, and the field of proprietary education.

Although accrediting agencies continue to encourage states to establish and enforce more effective procedures for authorizing educational activities within their borders, only a few states have enacted improved legislation. In some cases, oppressive legislation and regulations have been adopted in an attempt to control nontraditional institutions, especially those which cross over state and regional lines. Recently, the accrediting community has also

been criticized for not ensuring the quality of education delivered on military bases.

For several years now, the federal government has relied heavily on voluntary accreditation as a reliable authority on the quality of training. The scramble for federal dollars has brought many strange institutions to the doors of accrediting agencies and has tended to distort the original purposes of accreditation. This fact should be tempered, however, by the realization that some institutions have always sought accreditation for very practical reasons. It cannot be said that accreditation was suddenly blighted by governmental reliance on accreditation.

The accrediting community, which has for years called for intensive institutional self-analysis, is now beginning to study itself and to respond more fully to its many publics. There has been conflict within the community over the shift to the highly flexible approach--set in motion by the North Central Association's three-year study--and there is now beginning to be a recognition of an overreaction against the earlier quantitative standards. Also, as revealed by this COPA study on nontraditional education, accreditation has actually been, in many cases, overly solicitous of non-traditional education in order to avoid the criticisms of rigidity leveled by critics like Frank Newman.

Change in higher education and accreditation is occurring. One need only examine the influences of this study, the ACE Task Force on Credit and Credentials, the newly announced ACE task force on self-regulation, the COPA task force on quality, and pronouncements by associations of graduate deans and others. Further evidence of change is found in the fact that the

Southern, Western (Senior Commission), Northwest, and Middle States Associations have completed commission or association self-studies. The Western Association now opens commission policy meetings to the public, and the Senior Commission publishes negative actions and is implementing a policy on handling complaints.

A most significant force for change is the accrediting commissions' primary constituency, that is, those institutions that created and fund accrediting activity. As happened with the North Central Association forty-four years ago, higher education leadership is taking a more active role in an accrediting process that it once took for granted, tolerated, or even ignored. As accrediting boundaries are expanded by newer forms of education--some of untested quality--leaders of prominent institutions are asking their commission representatives to assume greater responsibility to assure both academic quality and institutional integrity. They are saying that higher education has moved too far toward open admissions, unstructured degrees, gradeless policies, inadequate libraries, adjunct faculties, unstructured systems of governance and administration, shoestring financial operations, and generous amounts of experiential credit.

The success of accreditation has made it more visible and vulnerable to criticism. It was inevitable that the same enlightened public that focused bright beams on higher education would also expose the strengths and weaknesses of accreditation as a source of great power in higher education. As Louis Heilbron, a member of the COPA board, has observed:

The general public conceives of the college as a kind of secular church. The public regarded the violence and abandonment of certain academic standards during the 60's

as "a desecration of the cathedral." . . . In the more peaceful 70's the general public is now concerned about inadequate returns from the increasingly high cost of attending college, not entirely in terms of guaranteed job placement but the general values and skills associated with an educated student. Adult and college age students are also resenting attempts of some institutions to market easy degrees which have large components of life experience credit.¹⁶

Although the vast majority of accredited colleges are performing with integrity and with proper attention to quality control, declining student populations have tempted some established institutions to compromise their standards and institutional ethics by promoting convenient, sometimes easy, educational packages for the consumption of a credential-hungry society. While it has already been observed that some students have become more sophisticated, others, particularly adults frustrated by work or traditional college experiences, have not been able to resist the lure of securing a bachelor's, master's, or even a doctor's degree with minimum effort, even though the cost is high. Institutions offering such alluring programs have understood well the inadequacy of accreditation to provide constant oversight, particularly with regard to highly dispersed operations, independent study, contractual arrangements, and the like. Too many degrees and courses have become marketable commodities, and too many students have purchased them with the dogmatic assumption that accreditation is an absolute guarantee of quality. It is not unfair to say that these students are partly at fault for not investigating programs adequately, for placing too much faith in the accrediting process, and for not expending sufficient effort to get the most from their tuition dollar.

There has been an increase in the number and variety of degrees conferred, with little consistency among institutions. Particularly is this evident in the growing number of graduate programs and free-standing graduate institutions. The higher education establishment could tolerate wide diversity and lesser quality in undergraduate programs and even at the master's level, but it registers deep concern when the quality of the doctorate is diluted and offered at almost any location by any institution.

The rejuvenation of general education requirements and core requirements is evidence of the swing toward earlier standards. The move toward more direct assessment of learning, for example, the new Undergraduate Assessment Program of the Educational Testing Service, is producing a need for clearer statements on purposes and the meanings of programs, degrees, and courses. In a survey of all institutions in the region encompassed by the Western Association Senior Commission, approximately 40% of respondents called for an increase in minimum accrediting standards.

The recently concluded COPA survey of 1,300 educators revealed that 86% thought that nontraditional education presented a challenge to the accrediting community as well as creating many problems. They identified as one of those problems the criteria used in the evaluation of nontraditional education, 38% indicating that the criteria were unclear for the institution and the visiting team. It is interesting to note, however, that only 13% thought that a new national accrediting agency should be created to deal with nontraditional education. In a survey of regional accrediting functions, respondents ranked first the promotion of institutional integrity and improvement, followed by: assurance that degrees represent certain minimal standards, the encouragement

of sound innovation, and the protection of consumer interest of students and the public.

Cautions

There is a danger perceived by some educators that the pendulum will swing too far back to the days when we thought we could quantify the accrediting process, with the attendant reduction of our vibrant and valuable pluralism. Also, it is abundantly clear that it is easier to develop and implement standards for evaluation of vocational, technical, and professional programs than for a complex university or a liberal arts college.

John Harris, in his recent article entitled, "A New Day for Assessment in Higher Education," writes about egalitarianism versus standards, posing serious questions about "the dilemma of maintaining standards while competing for students."²⁰

In responding to a draft of this paper, Robert Kirkwood, Executive Director of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, includes the following caveat:

Although you discuss accountability to some extent, I do not believe you have put the focus where it really belongs. It seems to me that the real issue in higher education for the foreseeable future is not whether institutions are complying with nine or eleven or twenty-one or any number of standards but rather on whether they are achieving significant and measurable results. There is an ironic note in this because the academic community has dragged its heels on the subject of outcomes measurement in considerable part because it fears that all education will be reduced to quantitative and statistical terms. The point remains, however, that unless we become more skillful in distinguishing between the measurable and the immeasurable aspects of educational experience and more articulate in communicating the rationale for what we do in higher education, all the standards in the world won't make that much difference.

It will also be difficult to reach agreement on standards in a society that has lost so many basic values and is groping for new ones. Even with the development of more precise accrediting standards, the primary burden must rest with each institution. Neal A. Maxwell states that:

A value-free society eventually imprisons its inhabitants. Our whole republic rests upon the notion of obedience to the unenforceable, upon a tremendous emphasis on inner controls through self-discipline. The historians Will and Ariel Durant observed that "if liberty destroys order, the hunger for order will destroy liberty."²¹

Keeping liberty and order oscillating within a tolerable range requires tremendous self-discipline in the citizenry of a nation. We more readily agree on both liberty and order as desirable values than on the standards for assessing and enforcing them.

Recommendations

1. The accrediting community should continue to respond to societal and higher education forces calling for more public disclosure of accrediting decisions and for standards that will be strict enough to protect the public interest, but sufficiently flexible to encourage, rather than inhibit, needed changes and innovations in postsecondary education. As these standards are understood more fully by institutions, visiting teams, commissions, and the public, higher education will experience more stability and a more effective accrediting process.
2. In order to achieve the goal set by the restoration of standards, it is essential that visiting team members understand the reasons for the standards, are skillfully trained to administer them, and

above all are sensitive to the particular needs of the institutions they visit.

3. As Troutt has suggested in his concluding chapter, standards for quality assurance should focus on direct assessments of degree quality rather than inferences from certain conditions, but patience and considerable resources will be needed before such measurements will be possible.

There is little danger that the current quest for more order, tighter standards, and more direct measures of learning will stultify or quantify higher education in this country; in fact, it will restore a much needed balance between freedom and responsibility. If this project on the evaluation of nontraditional education contributes to that balance, it will have performed a valuable function.

NOTES

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